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Christ's Secret Doctrine

And its Re-discovery in Modern
Thought and Life

BY

A. S. MORIES

AUTHOR OF "HAECKEL'S CONTRIBUTION TO RELIGION," ETC.

LONDON :

WATTS & CO.,

17 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.4

Index.

CHRIST'S SECRET DOCTRINE

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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Theology

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PREFACE

FOR quite a number of years the thought which forms the *raison d'être* of this little book had gradually dawned upon and come to dominate my mind: I mean the profound truth of the Unity and Continuity of the Divine with the human.

It was first, but very gradually, forced on me as the apparently inevitable *terminus ad quem* of modern science and modern philosophy. It latterly refused to be put aside, and steadily came to be felt as the very apotheosis of human thought. From this most masterful position it overflowed into purely religious thought, and, like the ceaseless, silent flow of the rising tide, finally invaded every corner of my being. The mind under such an influence could not avoid challenging, but in the most loyal and reverential spirit, what have generally been regarded as the unchallengeable dogmas of the Christian faith.

The practical and decisive question was then seen to be, Can these distinctive dogmas be found compatible with this victorious conviction? In short, is the existing theology of the Church, sanctified and consecrated, as it is, by the past ages of her history, really a true embodiment of the faith of Christ?

The author's answer to this plain question, as developed in these pages, is distinctly in the negative.

But just in proportion to the loyal Churchman's deep resentment against this challenge to his faith will be his profound relief and spiritual satisfaction at the discovery that, in the profound and far-reaching thought now rediscovered in his own Scriptures, not only does his formal faith find its permanent idealisation, but his own heaven-born passion for God finds its fullest satisfaction.

I shall not trench further on the argument which follows, but only add that I make no apology, as a layman, for venturing to meddle in so serious a controversy. The issue is not theological only, it is universal, and such as in its consideration to abolish all distinction between clergy and laity. One who was long perplexed over the issue at last feels that he dare not stand tamely by at such a time. He feels, rightly or wrongly, that the whole future of our Christian faith hangs on the true answer. And while he feels that he has no title, professional or other, to speak on the subject, his only reply is that *needs must*; and, to quote an abler pen, "it must not be forgotten that now and then some person will be stronger in his accidents than other and greater men have been in their powers, and that, while no greatest man or champion is going to conquer a truth before its time, no least competent man need miss of a truth when its hour has come, and the flags of right suggestion are all out before him."

That, it seems to me, describes the moment we have now reached; and no lesser influence, I believe, is involved in the answer than the very apotheosis of our faith, and ultimately of our life.

A. S. M.

September, 1917.

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CHRIST'S SECRET DOCTRINE

CHAPTER I

CHRIST'S SECRET DOCTRINE

"I and my Father are one."—JOHN x. 30.

THE science of comparative religion is young, but the facts of religion are as old as man. And, though the science is practically a creation of our own day, we have seldom had the courage openly to apply it to our own Christian faith. But science is no respecter of persons or of creeds. In such a melting-pot as this Christianity must be content to take its place and stand the common test of historical and spiritual analysis. In doing so it has the great advantage of seeing the results of the earlier faiths already recorded. They have already been tried and judged by history, while our own faith is still on its trial.

Now, there is one feature common to all religions which comes ready to our hand as a point of comparison. Nearly all the great religions of the world have had what are known as an exoteric and

an esoteric side—the one open and visible to all the world; the other specially reserved for the elect or inner circle of the faithful. There is nothing in this broad fact that should raise any prejudice in the candid mind. The distinction is one that runs through all things. The visible material universe, indeed, is the Exoteric embodiment of the Esoteric or unseen universe.

The form which this distinction has assumed in the religions of the world is seen in what are known as the “Mysteries,” of which nearly every historic faith supplies an illustration. From the rudest incantations of the savage to the most refined cults of both East and West we have the most variegated evidences of this inherent instinct of the human heart.

The chief object we have here in view is to show how far our own religion resembles other religions in this common feature, and in what respect it differs from and is superior to any and all of them.

It is well to face this matter in the most open and thorough way. For, however our common faith may endear and has endeared itself to the whole Christian community, unless it can take its place purely on its spiritual merits, alongside the other faiths of the world, and openly vindicate its superiority, it fails to carry with it the intelligence of mankind, or to make good any reasonable claim to be the World's religion.

Now, the Christian Church as a whole declines such a challenge, though, strange to say, her own records respond to it at once.

In the long ages of history there have appeared, as we know, many great World Teachers and inspiring Prophets; men who have themselves experienced, and therefore been enabled to bring home to the hearts of others, some special element of the Divine Beauty and Holy Purpose.

To state it in more general form, we believe that, in virtue of the great Rhythm of the Universe—that is to say, the ceaseless Self-manifestation of the Eternal Spirit, great Teachers periodically appear; and that each of those great Teachers is justified “in Reason’s ear,” by the addition which he has been privileged to bring to the Divine message.

Christianity, for the exceptional position which she claims in such a World movement as this, can find her warrant, not by alleging some special supernatural claim, but only by bringing some exceptional addition to the message, such as no previous Teacher or Seer had brought.

What, then, is Christianity’s special claim on the world’s allegiance? Wherein does Christ’s unique appeal to the human heart lie?

The first thing that strikes us in answering this question is that Christ Himself took up this very attitude, and spoke of some truth or vision of

Divine things which He could and would disclose only to His faithful disciples. And, even among the twelve, there were only a special few whom He felt to be capable of receiving and assimilating His secret doctrine. These He communed with more intimately and from time to time, as they were able to bear it, and revealed to them truths and thoughts which were hidden from most of the others. "To you," he told His disciples plainly, "it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom; to them it is not given."

That He used every power He possessed to bring home to their hearts and minds the great truth which fed His own inner life, we know.

Even so, He was too often miserably disappointed. And we know how constantly He was compelled to have recourse to parable and metaphor, as the only practicable, but generally only partially effective, method of handing on His special message to the world. He had to muffle it, in short, in order to preserve it for later ages. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Even to-day, after 1,900 years' experience and familiarity with the Bible as "the Word of God," it is still true that most Christian people resent the very idea of there being any so-called "secret" truth in Christ's teaching with which they are not already familiar. But so it really is, and it is no affectation of superior insight to

maintain it. What, then, was His special and distinctive Message?

It certainly was not the popular theology either of His own day or of any day since He left the earth. The common people, we are told, "heard Him gladly." Their after-treatment of Him, however, showed how superficially they had grasped His meaning or imbibed His spirit. More serious still, the whole history of the Church down to our own day shows how steadily her vision became dimmed and she herself blinded to the true message of Christ, of which all the while she proclaimed herself the mouthpiece, till to-day her whole elaborate creed has collapsed, and we wait a new revelation of Divine things.

But there *were* men who caught His meaning and shared His insight into Divine things, and we surely get a helpful suggestion towards His secret from the pointed summary of the Divine dealings with the human race which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives where he tells us that "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake to the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us 'in a Son.'"

There is a clear and striking distinction drawn here between the old and the new, and it is evidently intended to concentrate our attention on the special conception of "a Son."

Even this, of course, is a metaphor, but the

suggestion would seem to be that a prophet may speak forth what he believes or can gather up as to the Divine purpose. But "a son" is privileged. A son knows ("only the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him").

The Son is of the Divine household. He is, in fact, one with the Divine, as Christ put it when He felt lifted into great utterance of His message. "I and my Father are one." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." No wonder that this utterance, and others like it, which were of necessity blasphemous in the ears of some of His blinded hearers, ultimately cost Him His life. But, amazing to tell, He claimed the same Divine status for every human soul. That is to say, He showed them, as plainly as any words could, that He was proclaiming not any special or supernatural claim for Himself, but, on the contrary, a great natural fact, illuminating once for all the real nature and capacities of our human spirits. "I in you and ye in me, that ye may be one, *even as* We are one." As His most like-minded disciple said, "Beloved, now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He doth appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Or as His next gifted apostle puts it: "Sons of God, and if sons then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." Sons of God! Heirs

of God ! What does such daring language mean but possessors, or as another apostle puts it, "partakers of the Divine Nature" ? "Theion Genos," belonging to the Divine race ; that is to say, having as our very birthright a wealth in our nature whose possibilities are beyond the dream of the most daring.

Here, we cannot doubt, we get as far from mere metaphor as the writer's fiery soul could take him.

That this, then, was the secret doctrine of Christ, there can be no reasonable question. So profoundly did His consciousness bring the Eternal Presence into His very being, that the words in which He identified Himself with the Father, and which have always been an irritating puzzle to the dull-minded, as well as to the clever Rationalist (who is nothing more), were to Him the spontaneous expression of His daily inner life.

He taught us that "The Beyond" whom we worship and adore as the Eternal is also "The Within" who is the centre and soul of our own being.

In sober truth, what a doctrine ! Is it any wonder that He had to keep it in reserve till even His most attached followers could "bear" it ?

Man Divine ! Yes. When we really think it out, what else or other can He be ?

Human reason has all along been baffled and

kept in the dark without the transcendent thought which this truth carries with it.

The standing puzzles even of philosophy can be solved only in its light.

Not that this secret doctrine of Christ was altogether new. It is far too fundamental for that. In the old Brahmanic faith of India (to cite the most exalted of the older faiths) what we may call the Divine side of it had been long familiar. In the consciousness of India the Eternal Spirit inhabited and overshadowed everything, and all but obliterated the human self. Their consciousness of the Eternal was unparalleled elsewhere. But it was too metaphysical, too unrelated to personal experience, to enter much into the practical life of the people.

In the consciousness of Christ, on the contrary, the human spirit *rose into* the Divine, and, with entire reverence, boldly appropriated it as its very birthright, thus making the doctrine the greatest and most spiritually fertile reality in human life.

It was this intimate overmastering consciousness of the Eternal Spirit as Love which He unveiled, and gave to His disciples, and which was His true message and "work" to the world.

Any other kind of work would have disappeared in time. This was a new Consciousness of the Eternal which, once it was infused into even a

few faithful hearts, could not be lost or disappear, but would run like wildfire through human life and by its own inherent power win more and more the hearts of men.

This was the work of which He could truly say, "Tetelestai," "It is finished."

It is this blending of His own consciousness with the Divine that differentiates the faith of Christ, and gives it its paramount place in the development of the human spirit.

For the initiation into and development of such a consciousness as this it can easily be seen that "Mysteries," in the old cultural sense, are of relatively small moment. This is, on the contrary, the apotheosis of *direct personal contact* with the Eternal. There is, no doubt, quite a legitimate place for forms and ceremonies even in our own faith. We can all profit by their use, and the majority of men and women need them.

The broad fact remains that "Mysteries," in the ancient and popular sense of the word, are alien to Christianity. The one great Mystery of Christianity is an *open*, not a closed, secret. Paul called it the "Mystery of Godliness" (or piety), "God *manifest* in the flesh." It is, in fact, the crowning mystery of our own nature.

Of that nature Christ laid bare the inherent grandeur, and once for all fulfilled all the cults and mysteries of the ancient world in His own

consecrated Divine-human life. He not only saw into the mystery, He taught it and lived it.

One has no need to throw contempt on the moral value of the ancient mysteries in order to vindicate the superiority of our own faith. These several mysteries were, in their own degree, evidences of the passion of man for the Unseen, and sincere earnest seekers could always find in them much to inspire and stimulate their souls.

But Christ's unparalleled consciousness of the Unseen, taken along with His daring appropriation of that great Unseen spirit as His "Father and our Father—His God and our God"—summed them all up in one immortal thought, which for ever distinguishes the religion which bears His name, and is the permanent source and origin of all the religious mysteries of the world.

It is astonishing how near our great European thinkers, too, before Christ, came to the grasping of this great truth. They at least felt that somehow the only answer to their soul's demand lay in the depths of their own nature. Man "know thyself" was the pregnant motto of the greatest among ancient European thinkers. Peer into your own marvellous nature—or, as a great kindred but more ancient branch of our Aryan race puts it, when they declare (by the living voice in our own day) that "the everlasting Friend of man is

to be found, and only found, in the full consciousness of our own souls."

If any professing Christian should question the propriety of such a startling thought as part of the essential faith of Christianity, let him bear in mind that some of the earliest Fathers of the Church, the men who stood nearest in time to the Master (after His special disciples) did not hesitate to say plainly, that "Christ became man that we might become divine." In the words of a modern philosopher, "Christianity proclaimed as its principle the very idea which ancient thought had been unable to realise—the substantial unity of God and man" (Schwegler). The fact is undoubted, but it is more than even the modern Church can bear. It was at that time, too, more than the Church could grasp. For it died for many centuries out of the faith of Christian people. But it was too vital and central to be lost.

It was, indeed, unconsciously preserved in the form of the greatest parable that history records. For the great central dogma of the deity and incarnation of Christ, which was fought for so tenaciously down the ages, was itself but a great symbolic casket devised by the thinkers as well as by the instinct of the Church; and all the while preserving a truth a thousandfold greater than their thought could as yet dare to grasp.

And now in the fullness of the ages this same

deep truth is steadily being re-thought and re-asserted throughout Christendom, and will surely never again be lost sight of.

It seems to be a truth too rich and rare for the daily food of even most Christians, and has still to be adapted for every-day use.

It is the central truth of all religion, and nothing less can form the basis of a true *World-Religion*. It is the essential glory of Christianity that she has unconsciously preserved this great cosmic and spiritual revelation.

It is this that raises her beyond the need and beyond the level of merely ceremonial mysteries, and puts her in the front rank of the religions of the world. On no narrower foundation dare we rest the future of religion than on this wondrous revelation of the Divine dignity and eternal value of human nature. Christ's own habitual consciousness of it was naturally one of intense joy. He spoke of it as "My joy," and prayed that His disciples might share it and that "their joy might be full." His presence and His message were received by His faithful hearers with a similar joy.

What else could result if that new consciousness of God's presence and love as our own was once really taken home to a man's spirit?

Let us utter the thought again with all reverence. "Man divine!" This poor, weak, erring mortal "a partaker of the divine nature!" Such a

revelation, as we may well call it, causes to surge up in a man's consciousness, as nothing else can, a sense of his utter weakness and unworthiness in the sight of God. It gives sad and abundant warrant for the wildest cries of humiliation and repentance. But it lifts him at the same time to the highest heights of spiritual enjoyment, for it reveals in him his own imperishable inheritance, the very nature and spirit of the Eternal, and bids him "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." It confers on him the very "freedom of the universe."

Is it any wonder that its dawn opened a new era in the life of man? Did ever such a blaze of light burst on the confused sight of our race?

This truth which Christ so clearly taught is at the root of all idealism, all Mysticism, all ecstasy, in short all the higher life of man.

It is the truth in which (each under its own form of apprehension) philosophy, science, and art find their one meeting-place. The metaphysical doctrine, *e.g.*, of what is called the Relativity of thought, long presumed to bar men for ever from true contact with the Eternal, and has thus been the parent of modern Agnosticism and Scepticism. Here in this unity and continuity of the human with the Divine, of the seen with the unseen, that barren doctrine practically disappears, and man finds himself in true spiritual contact with the

Eternal. As for Science, the very possibility of a complete science is based on this same continuity of all nature; while as for the artist, this is the very atmosphere in which he lives.

The unity and continuity of the Divine and the human, of the seen and the unseen, thus appeal alike to artist, thinker, and saint.

The knowledge and assimilation of this truth is literally a sharing in the life of God. It was not from any hallucination, nor even out of any mere affectionate domination by the Person of Christ, that His comparatively uneducated disciple could say with the evident fervour of experience, "This is Eternal life to know Thee," and that our own Church of England, in her multifarious invocations, does not forget to reiterate that same high note of the Eternal music, "In knowledge of whom standeth our Eternal Life."

The truth is, that great flash of Christ's insight flung wide open, once for all, the very gates of heaven. This was pre-eminently His gospel. It was in that high vision of our continuity with the Divine that "He abolished death and brought life and immortality to light."

It matters little what type or calibre of mind is turned even momentarily to this blazing centre of the universe, the ecstatic response is ever the same. "Lord God Almighty!" cried the passionate Nature-lover when all the glory of even

a Speyside glen suddenly opened to his gaze, and he burst into tears.

"Methought I saw Heaven opened and the great God Himself!" Handel in ecstasy confessed, when listening to his own Messiah Chorus, played as it can be played.

And even by the philosophical and analytical mind something of the same deep joy is experienced, though not, of course, expressed in the same pictorial form. "To be spiritually awake," wrote the late reverent thinker, Lewis Campbell, "is to live in the world of universals." By the cold and purely logical mind this aphorism will perhaps be accounted merely a literary catchword. But the truth it carries is laden with the very being and life of God. For what are the real universals for the mind and spirit of man? They are the very qualities which Scripture specially identifies with the Being of God. "God is Light"—"God is Love"—"God is Spirit."

Could the spirit of man revel and find itself at home in any richer sea of universals than these?

With the thought of God compounded in the alembic of our own spirits, with these universal elements, can the humble, communing soul be anything but ecstatic? "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain to it."

No, but our spirits can live in its light and we can love by the strength of it, and thus learn

slowly to enrich our personality till all thought of "self," either in imagination or in act, is lost, and the ardour of the Eternal is all in all.

The World-Religion, when it comes, will be no mere amalgam of either ancient creeds or modern shibboleths. The very mingling of the ends of the earth and the creeds of the world on the great battlefield of to-day is itself a great prophecy. It proclaims the doom of all mere sectional and institutional religion. If that prophecy is ever to be fulfilled, we must learn to rest on the universals of all religion. These we can find summed up only in the distinctive thought which we have here sought to emphasise—the divinity, and therefore the universal and permanent *brotherhood*, of man, seen as a living model for all time in the person, life, and teaching of Christ.

This sense of universal brotherhood is being stamped to-day on our hearts and consciences and intellects as never before. If Christianity is enabled to emerge from the present crisis, she cannot fail to be purified and ennobled, and to win a closer insight into her Master's grip of the Eternal than ever.

The ways of God will thus at least be vindicated. Our religion will at last begin to be fully understood, and will enter on a new and pregnant era that will eclipse even her highest past.

This and nothing less is the issue at stake in

this world-wide war. Our boasted Protestant theology is dead, and with it has gone the elaborate artificial view of God and of Divine things that has so long satisfied us.

Along with that view there has also gone the false morality which its artificialism engendered.

The only thing that can permanently take its place is a World-Religion and a morality based on the realisation of our own Divinity, and on the Eternal Brotherhood of man as by nature a Son and Heir of God.

CHAPTER II

CONTINUITY. WHAT DOES IT UNVEIL?

Minor
"All things by immortal power
Near or far,
Hiddenly
To each other linked are,
That thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star."

FRANCIS THOMPSON.

I HAVE an aged friend, a most cultured mystic, who is in the habit of summing up his estimate of any writer or thinker by saying, "His vision is," so and so, naming in a word or two the typical element or the range of his thought, and especially of his insight. It is an appropriate phrase on the lips of a man gifted, as I know him to be, with a clairvoyance of intellect and spirit that shields him from any possible charge of mere affected superiority.

The phrase, however, may suitably be applied to an age as well as to an individual. We may, therefore, profitably ask ourselves to-day, What is the latest and most succinct account of our view of the universe, that is to say, of our vision of

reality? For, after all, the vision of the unseen is the great task of the human spirit, and it must be won by each generation for itself.

Now, there are two fundamental hindrances to all such vision which no human being can ignore, and against which the spirit of man has ever beaten and continues to beat, with, however, a deep instinct that these barriers are in some way or other not wholly insurmountable.

These are the apparently blank wall of the world of matter which so hems us in, and the apparently still more insurmountable limitations of our finite spirit, in its insatiable demand for the infinite. Round these two great lines of thought and observation have the perpetual swirl of controversy and the clash of opposing attitudes revolved and still revolve.

Are we any more assured to-day on these problems of humanity than were our forefathers? And, specially, has our own day made any contribution towards their solution? Is a clearer vision any nearer to-day?

The first of these is the problem of Materialism. And the progress of discovery in the science of material things has been so great in recent years that we can ask with some confidence, What fresh contribution has modern Science made towards the solution?

Direct declaration or demonstration of an unseen

world is obviously not to be looked for from Science. But Science, too, has its secret doctrine. Scientific research has, in these days, converged on two conceptions which, besides being in themselves purely physical conclusions, are found at the same time to be equally metaphysical. For Matter itself is now declared, when traced to its essence, to be simply centres of Force or Energy, and the whole material universe is described as continuous and inter-connected throughout its entire range.

The Ether, or its completely energised equivalent, is declared to be the universal material medium. Without such a medium the very law of gravitation, as well as the chemical constitution of the universe, would be impossible and meaningless. To the eye of insight how full of meaning is this conviction of modern Science! The poets readily grasp it and express it in its most suggestive beauty—

“ All things by immortal power
Near or far,
Hiddenly
To each other linked are,
That thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star.”

This in itself purely material fact, known as “Continuity,” forces on our minds the broad and most pregnant conclusion that the whole series of physical phenomena, not only constitute an all-penetrating process, but are only intelligible when

recognised as a Unity. What is called Matter and what is called Spirit are, in fact, coming to be regarded as simply the obverse and reverse of this all-embracing Unity. On its obverse side it is Material, on its reverse side Spiritual, or at least Immaterial.

Modern scientific discoveries have thus of themselves pushed the whole materialistic controversy on to a higher level. They force us to pierce this apparently blank wall of Matter, and, by this X-ray of "Continuity," to discern a link with the unseen which has not hitherto been fully acknowledged by pure Science.

They even compel us to ask ourselves if the psychological veil which seems to hide the Infinite from our finite spirit may not also be penetrable. The fact of Continuity which Science herself has established has thus transferred the venue from physics to metaphysics, and becomes itself one of the most helpful stepping-stones into the invisible. To quote the words of one of the chief living exponents of Science—

"The Ether is not Matter, but it is material—it belongs to the Material Universe, and is to be investigated by ordinary methods. But to say this, is not to deny that it may have mental and spiritual functions to subserve in some other order of experience, as Matter has in this" (Sir O. Lodge, British Association "Address," 1913).

This Continuity, then, is not in the same category with the discovery of a new planet or even of a new element. It is a conception and fact common to both material and immaterial—the physicists and the philosophical thinkers meet here on common and complementary ground. And the thinker's share in the problem it raises is much more profound and subtle than that of the scientist. The thinker has to begin here where the scientist ends.

Now what does this fact of Continuity really imply? Does it or can it give us any assurance or direct suggestion of the reality of things?

It raises from a new quarter the question of questions for the human spirit. Can we really know the Universal and Eternal? Does the finite come in any way into touch with the Infinite?

This problem of Epistemology, as it has been technically called, has vexed and puzzled the thinkers of all ages. The popular theology, of course, has never had any trouble with it. Symbolism and Metaphor have fortunately sufficed the popular mind. No doubt we shall never be able wholly to dispense with symbolism and metaphor, but there comes a time when the trained mind demands the purest and most direct form of the conception of the Eternal that thought and experience can suggest. Such an ever-recurring time has now come. We are face to face with the question

as never before. And it is surely striking that one most illuminating contribution to this demand should turn out to be this very conception of Continuity, which, as we have seen, is the latest word of the scientific mind.

This question of the thinkers is at first sight, no doubt, presumptuous in the extreme. For what finite spirit dares openly to claim continuity with the Infinite?

But the thinker absolutely needs this fact. It dovetails perfectly into his only workable scheme of things. And it is the induction of the world's richest experience that has now laid it at his feet. Not only do the scientists teach it. The poets, the sages, and the mystic, with sublime independence of science, declare with one voice its truth. Speaking out of the depths of their own experience they realise it spiritually. To them it is no dream or mere possibility. It is the most satisfying and commanding fact of their inner lives. Rank Materialists, of course, profess to scout this fact as of no evidential value, and imagine that they can dismiss it by dubbing it auto-suggestion or hallucination. But inner experience is as really a fact as is any outer and visible event. "I think, therefore I am," is still unchallengeable. And "I feel and see, therefore I know," is in its own region equally valid.

The practically universal character, too, of this

inner experience calls for explanation, and demands its place in any rational account of the universe.

Now there is no denying the fact that, as we have already said, a great tide of converging thought and knowledge and generalisation has poured in on our modern thinkers, driving them unmistakably to the teaching and spirit whose generic name is Mysticism. And Mysticism, by its own instinctive intuition, surmounts this crux of mere intellectualism, and experiences the sense of that which cold materialism says is impossible. For Mysticism, experimentally, is spirit in touch with spirit.

This Mysticism of our own day, however, has been largely indebted to scientific teaching.

“Science has discovered, for example, that man’s power of conceptual thought and of abstraction has been gradually evolved from the conceptional stages of thought and ideation in the nearest related mammals, and differs from them only in degree and not in kind, quantitatively not qualitatively.

“One of the last barriers for faith seems here to be broken down, and the very soul of man made continuous with the instincts of the brute creation, and all these in their turn merely the outcome of material combination.” ¹

That inner or secret doctrine of Science, then, connects man on his earthward side with the lowest forms of being.

¹ *Haeckel's Contribution to Religion*, p. 15.

Christ's secret doctrine, on the other hand, continues that connection on its heavenward side, and discerns that community of spirit which links the human to the Divine itself.

We do not pretend to say that Christ Himself entertained such details of thought.

He saw by His pure insight and appropriated the truth by His native spiritual sympathy. He needed no intermediate intellectual stepping-stones. "I and my Father are one" was His spiritual vade-mecum, as well as the great bond of union between Him and His brethren. What He felt and saw philosophy merely endeavours to analyse, and this principle of Continuity gives it a solid basis in fact and reason.

There is a resemblance between the reception which this doctrine of Continuity met with at the hands of ordinary religious people and that which Christ's own secret doctrine met with in His own day.

When the special "interventions" of the Creator at the successive appearances, *e. g.*, of mineral, vegetable, and animal life were found to slip from their grasp, men felt as if God Himself was being dropped out of His own universe. But a larger and truer view has gradually been restoring and ennobling their faith.

So with the ancient and essentially pagan doctrine of intervention, Christ's teaching staggered

even His disciples. But their eyes were gradually opened to it, and this teaching of Christ is the only faith that can sum up the aspirations of our race.

It leaves to the ancient doctrine the humble function which Paul ascribed to the Law. It is a schoolmaster and guide to lead those who need it to the Temple door. Once inside, the whole conception slips away. To-day we cannot but feel that this schoolmaster still fills an important rôle for the timid seeker after truth and reality.

In the attitude taken up in this little volume we aim at a reasonable faith—a faith to which vision of the highest order is not and cannot be alien. It is a faith which shrinks not from incorporating any facts, however startling to the dull bystander, that are seen to fit into the rich, variegated mosaic of Christ's own faith and life.

CHAPTER III

MYSTICISM AND ECSTASY

*"Quam dulce est petentibus !
Sed quid invenientibus !"*

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX.

"Whether in the body or out of the body God knoweth."—
PAUL.

IT is almost a commonplace to speak of the remarkable convergence of serious thought to-day towards what is recognised and described as Mysticism.

Whatever else this movement may lead to, it is a striking reaction from the materialistic and coldly rationalistic faith (if it can be called a faith) that so widely prevailed during the mid-nineteenth-century scientific invasion.

No one who has lived through the latter half of the nineteenth century can fail to be struck by the remarkable change in this respect that has taken place in the general tone of religious thought, at least in more or less educated circles.

We do not believe that this change has yet seriously touched the great bulk of ordinary church-goers,

As every one knows, the theology of "the people" is one of the most unassailable redoubts of human nature. Fortunately for average human nature, and especially for the Church as an institution, average morality and even average Christian faith are maintained on very short commons, so far as theology is concerned.

But the educated faith of to-day is the faith of the more or less distant to-morrow, and to it we turn our attention.

The permanent keynote of personal Mysticism is a more or less keenly conscious life in the unseen, and, at the risk of leaving some timid readers behind, we propose to look at the Mystic faith in its most sublimated form.

But being thoroughly convinced that the Mystic faith in all its expressions has a rational basis in the whole nature of things, we sincerely hope to succeed in disarming the timid reader, or at least to induce him to accompany us in what we have to say on this old-standing climax of the Mystic faith.

As this climax of the Mystic Spirit is Ecstasy, we go on to ask, What is the place of Ecstasy in the hierarchy of life and thought?

Shrewd men of the world regard Ecstasy as mere hallucination. Many even who are looked on as wise men in the Church slight it as the inroad of mere unguarded enthusiasm into the religious life.

At least one vigorous and well-known thinker

condemns it wholesale as an instance of what he calls Degeneracy. But the one quite sufficient answer to this writer is that he denounces all genius of whatever kind as belonging to that same category.

Minds more careful and candid than any of these will at least study the fact for themselves, and look for an explanation of Ecstasy more rational and more consistent with history and experience.

By cool psychological observers, then, Ecstasy might be cautiously described as high emotional exaltation.

Under whatever form or in whatever degree it may be met with, this is its distinguishing feature. And the peculiar and suggestive fact is, that there is not only a great variety of grades of exaltation, but a great variety in the channels through which it rises and invades the human spirit. This seems to indicate that Ecstasy, whatever else it may seem to be in extreme cases, is native to the spirit of man.

If Ecstasy, then, is the supreme realisation of spiritual exaltation, we are entitled to turn to our every-day experience and to ask ourselves how far its germs or beginnings are to be found there.

Is Ecstasy the exceptional experience of the élite only of the race? or does it come within the range of common men? Can we on any rational grounds claim kinship, however distant, with the Mystic?

The answer to such a question will only be found

when we study what we may quite properly call the natural history of the human spirit.

It is from such a study—such a spiritual induction—that we may hope, if possible, to affiliate ecstasy to the ordinary exercise of the thoughtful intelligent spirit. Now such a thing as exaltation of spirit is obviously only capable of analysis in an adult human being, and an adult human being first begins to appear at the age of puberty. This is, in fact, the starting-point of physical, mental, and spiritual maturity.

Over and above the physiological ripening which marks this period, the great mental and moral expansion of the spirit begins to usher in power and aspirations hitherto undreamt of.

There is an atmosphere of vague but seemingly endless possibilities, culminating in a sense of enlarged possession, that is in its essential element kin with what is later known as Ecstasy.

It is the atmosphere in which take shape not only the more or less brutish dreams of animal desire, but the very purest suggestions and aspirations of the human spirit. So keenly has this been recognised by learned observers and students, that some writers have not hesitated to ascribe the whole religious development of man to a Phallic source.

There is no call in the thoughtful student to scout the element of truth contained in such an idea.

The universality of the sexual instinct, its vital

correlation with the passion of Love, and the widespread evidence of its influence in shaping the first expression of the religious instinct, justify us in giving due heed to the suggestion.

If Religion is the expression of man's highest power and aspirations, this most ineradicable of the natural passions cannot be ignored in any account of the origin of Religion.

But we pass on to find that the intellectual expansion too, which seems so unresponsive to mere emotion, has its open door into high exaltation of spirit. In this particular form it comes with almost equal fascination to the young student, to the ripe scholar, and even to the laborious scientific observer. Its natural stepping-stone here is generalisation.

To the school-boy the mind of the elder student is an unimaginable experience, while the educated thinker attains a power and an outlook that put all nature under his feet. Emerson says somewhere, "Every generalisation is a new influx of divinity into the mind, hence the thrill that attends it." The thrill of the universal, even in this partial form, is instinctively discerned as a revelation, that is to say, as a raising of the mind into a higher plane of thought. The sweep of Kepler's astronomical discoveries culminated in his ecstatic confession, "O God! I think Thy thoughts after Thee!"

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More obviously still, may we not say of the artistic faculty that it has an ever-ready access to exalted feeling? The artist in colour comes into sympathetic touch with the rhythmical undulations of light as they break on the variegated forms of material things, and attains thus to a vision of one beautiful facet of the universal harmony.

The artist in sound—the musician—comes into equally direct touch with the harmonious vibration of the same universal medium, and is carried more rapidly still beyond his every-day consciousness. As for the poet, he, like the eagle, dares to look the sun in the face. His very *raison d'être* is the vision of the Ideal. He is as free from intervening limitation as it is given to a human spirit to be. And Ecstasy is his highest achievement. Poetic Genius, in fact, has been called the expression of the “*état passionnel*.”

The lover, too, is at home in a quite analogous expansion of the spirit. Idealisation of his beloved and identification of himself with her are his native air.

And there are still more powerful conditions of the spirit that even more directly corroborate what we have said. It is Goethe who says that “the soul is purified by terror,” not, that is to say, by mere fright or fear, but rather by the sudden vision of catastrophe or calamity. The soul in such a case is brought face to face with the reality of things,

and with a flash of that insight that, in degree, is inherent in every human spirit, sees the otherwise invisible.

Or, as a dramatist of our own day says: "Tragedy at its best is a vision of the heart of life. The heart of life can only be laid bare in the agony and exultation of dreadful acts"; and he adds: "The vision of agony or spiritual contest pushed beyond the limits of the dying personality is exalting and cleansing. It is only by such a vision that a multitude can be brought to the passionate knowledge of things exalting and eternal" (*The Tragedy of Nan*, Preface, by John Masefield).

Now, not to speak meantime of religious exaltation, what, we ask, is the meaning and what is the source of all this exaltation? How comes it that through such varied channels there should be found a common access to a common exaltation? Why should emotional exaltation be found to be so universal an element in human experience? This raises one of the profoundest problems that human thought can encounter. In the true answer will be found the key to philosophy, religion, science, and art. To attempt the answer with any laborious dialectic is not our object here. We are content to follow the course which each human spirit must follow on its own responsibility, and assume this widespread experience as reliable and true. But without presuming to demonstrate, it is a sugges-

tive fact that even on the physiological view of the matter the affiliation of all these forms of exalted feeling demands as their underlying nexus the thought of a single universal medium with an apparently endless response to the varied faculties of human nature. We see by means of its undulations, hear by means of its vibrations, and even rise to the highest flight of our imagination, largely by means of its endless analogies and suggestions. The more we apprehend and assimilate this universal element, the more do we realise its kinship with ourselves.

We are content, then, to assume that which no one man can demonstrate to another, and yet it is that without which both life and thought, in all such manifestations as we have referred to, lose their deepest meaning.

The Continuity of the human with the Divine, in short, is a truth that, once it is really grasped and assimilated, is found to be the light of all our seeing.

This great universal fact is the never-failing source of all the emotional exaltation of which we have spoken—and the closer its appropriation the richer is the exaltation.

This great fact of the unity of the human with the Divine is the fundamental property and privilege of every man. Every man has the same open door to Ecstasy at his command. The humblest and most illiterate may grasp in his own way the

hidden riches of the Unseen. This is especially so in the case of directly religious exaltation. Every throb of ecstatic joy is simply the living response of the human spirit to the perpetual outflow of the universal spirit. It may be experienced, as we have seen, in various forms. Psychologically it may be described as the passage of the human spirit from the particular to the general, from what we call the real to the ideal; from the external letter to the spirit which is internal and omnipresent. Or, to put it in other words, it is the passage from a more to a less limited consciousness of the universe in which we find ourselves, from the pressure of our instinctive self-consciousness to the growing consciousness of the Universal Self in which we find our own Self gradually submerged and enriched. At each stage in this expansion of our being, under the growing stimulus of our environment we gradually leave behind us, and thus get "out of," the earliest and more restricted spiritual experience, finally reaching that richest of all conditions in which self-consciousness is practically lost, and we are more or less ecstatically conscious of the Universal Eternal Spirit.

But it becomes necessary here to modify and interpret the expression commonly used to describe the condition to which all these psychological estates converge.

The word Ecstasy is most expressive and radi-

cally true. It would seem, however, to suggest that the exalted spirit leaves behind him and goes beyond and outside into some objective consciousness quite apart from his own. The metaphor of externality is natural and almost unavoidable. But, as a matter of fact, the movement, if such a word can be used of it, is in exactly the opposite direction.

We retire inwards. We leave the troubled surface of our ordinary thoughts and cares and endless distractions, and by calm contemplation, or, it may even be, by some sudden shock of strong feeling, we get a glimpse, short it will generally be, but overpowering, of that Eternal Self who is the centre and soul of our whole being. We are enabled in that brief glimpse to forget entirely our self-consciousness, and to become conscious, in some slight but true measure, of the Self that is beyond ourselves—the Great World-Spirit we call God. As John Caird said, “Self-consciousness is the form of an infinite content.”

There are painfully cautious people, people even of undoubted note in the philosophical circles of to-day, who warn us just here against taking too much for granted. They tell us that all that in such circumstances we can profess to be conscious of is something other than and (they will even agree) greater than ourselves. But they disown the thought of the direct approach by the puny

human spirit to the Eternal Spirit of the Universe. This is a misplaced humility. From such a criticism we turn at once to experience.

We shall even meet the critics so far as to admit that we cannot prove to their satisfaction either the existence or the kinship of the Eternal Spirit.

What then? *Solvitur ambulando*. Put the experience honestly to the test, and explain the result in your own terms. To our mind the only satisfying explanation is that we become lifted into a rare and ultimately overpowering sense of union and communion with the Spirit of the Universe—with that, indeed, which brings its own vindication, and fills our spirits to overflowing. And if there is any justification for what has been said, that justification must be traceable in the simplest and most unlettered as well as in the most gifted life. The religious consciousness is the most deeply seated instinct of the human spirit. A thousand untoward influences, both inner and outer, may choke and to all appearance deaden it, but in the nature of things it cannot be eradicated or wholly destroyed. Its most universal channel is that of simple human sympathy and fellow-feeling of man with man, which, after all, is the very *locum tenens* of the Divine Love. The religious life is so often associated with praise, prayer, and preaching that the poorer classes of our people, who, to our shame, take little or no part in these exercises of worship,

actually come to feel as if they were beyond the bounds of a true Christian fellowship. On the contrary, it is often there in unassuming simplicity of life and tenderness of heart that the spirit of religion shines most clearly. The fellow-feeling which so spontaneously breaks out on the part of the poor towards the poor is the hallmark of the religious life, as it is the germ of all ecstasy. We are all, in fact, being led steadily and surely into the religion of the spirit in a sense more literal than we generally dare to think. We are often too timid to avow it as religion at all. It is a spirit that reveals to us our own capacity and hunger for the things eternal, and is ever feeding that hunger at its very source. Verily when the scales of our dark eyes are removed there are last that shall be first, and first last, and he that "dwelleth in love" here shall be seen and known to have been all the while dwelling in God.

Obviously, then, the distinctive field of ecstatic experience must be the religious life, the life whose essential meaning is communion with the Eternal.

What, then, has the history of religion to tell us of the appearance and growth of Ecstasy?

We find that it has flourished and still abounds in Heathendom as well as in Christianity, and much is to be learned from its records among many of the ancient Eastern peoples. Indeed it is not too much to say that on this very subject of the true rationale

of ecstasy the ancient religions of the East, faithfully preserved as their teaching has been, are, and have always been, far in advance of Western insight. Speaking generally, the conceptions of God framed respectively by East and West may be epitomised by the two words Immanence and Transcendence.

For the purpose of the spiritual life we in the West are coming to regard both, no doubt, as needed. But in the main we stand by the Transcendence of God as a working principle, whereas in the East the thought of Immanence is specially native to their whole cast of mind. So markedly is the latter the case that Western minds are apt to recoil from its alleged Pantheistic tendencies.

Such a prejudice is really unworthy of an enlightened Christianity. For what was the teaching of the Founder of our own faith?

Pictorial and practical as it necessarily was, it embraced both of these leading thoughts. He Himself was essentially "a man of God," and so subtly and wholly was His own spirit wrapped up in the Eternal that it fired every soul He came in contact with. That He had His private times of enraptured vision or communion is plain to the commonest reader. It is this alone that can give intelligible meaning to many of His otherwise incomprehensible sayings.

The truth is, "intoxicated with ardour, light,

and love," restrained ecstasy was the normal condition of His Spirit—that which gave the indescribable charm and "virtue" to His presence.

This is the very condition of spirit that He passed on to His disciples. We are all familiar, perhaps too familiar, with the outside facts of the story, and are apt to forget in what the force of His message really lay.

It was into the unforgettable metaphor of the Divine Fatherhood—"My Father and your Father"—that He translated His own ineffable experience.

And it is remarkable how the word "joy," which is the very essence of ecstasy, is the ever-recurring expression made use of in the New Testament to describe the immediate effect of that message on His disciples. He Himself spoke of His inner experience as "My joy," and prayed that it might remain with His followers. Even when He figured it "as the Kingdom of God," it was "within you," and was simply "joy in the Holy Spirit." This intense joy of spirit was the first fact that struck the outside world, and was the original note of Christianity. And, as has been well said, "The truth and rapture of man are holy things, not lightly to be scorned." It is surely interesting and suggestive to find this unmistakable outcome of the Christian Message matched quite independently, and with no reference to Christianity or any special form of religion, in the brilliant

works of one of our leading twentieth-century thinkers, M. Bergson.

Bergson, writing in the most careful empirical spirit as to the significance of life and the destiny of man, says—

“ Nature has taken pains to give us notice every time this destiny is accomplished. She has set up a sign which apprises us, every time our activity is in full expansion—this sign is ‘joy’—I say joy, I do not say pleasure. Pleasure, in point of fact, is no more than an instrument contrived by Nature to obtain from the individual the preservation and the propagation of life—it gives us no information concerning the direction in which life is flung forward. True joy, on the contrary, is always an emphatic signal of the triumph of life ” (*Hibbert Journal*, October 1911).

This joy of the first disciples was to them the greatest triumph of their lives. It was the instinctive response to the new thought of the Fatherhood of the Eternal. How else could such a thought find expression save in joy? It was Nature’s living testimony to her identity with the Eternal.

Harnack, too, speaking of the form into which the cultured Greek mind translated the Christian message, tells us that, when it was announced that the “Logos” had appeared among men, it had an intoxicating effect on the Greek world. They

became over-mastered by the apprehension of a spiritual Presence and Power wholly new to them in this rich form. It planted the seed of Ecstasy in the heart of the poorest among them. It lifted them out of themselves. They became thenceforward "new creatures." No sooner did this so-called "holy spirit" fall on the disciples and take possession of them than "they spoke with tongues and glorified God." These things—the "spirit" and the "tongues"—as well as the never-to-be-forgotten healing power, are so frequently conjoined in the Scripture story that it is evident the Ecstasy of which they were the inward and the outward expressions was the unmistakable sign of the effective reception of the good news.

Paul, too, who never knew Christ after the flesh, caught up this interpenetration of spirit with greater enthusiasm and to more tremendous purpose than any man among the early Christians. His keynote was "Rejoice evermore!" Paul, indeed, in the keenness of his missionary enthusiasm, may be said to have risen above metaphor. He went direct to the heart of things. The Ecstasy that overwhelmed him on the Damascus road was the result of his sudden apprehension of the Eternal Spirit as a loving Person, as, indeed, the Spirit of Love. His favourite name for it was "the Christ," thus relating it apparently to the current idealistic thought of his time in both the Pagan

and Jewish world. But it was always an internal Christ—"Christ in you" he called it to his hearers, while in his own inner experience he spoke of it, in the true mystic spirit, as "I, yet not I."

In his epistles he went the length of using so realistic and sensuous a metaphor as "glued to the Lord as one spirit." It was this discernment of the Eternal Spirit as Love that marked out Paul as "the apostle to the Gentiles." He felt his new faith to be a universal faith, a world-faith founded on the very nature and life of God.

All these forms and expressions—Christ's own imperishable metaphors of the Divine Fatherhood, the Kingdom of God, etc.—are, after all, but intellectual flashlights by which we get glimpses of that Eternal and invisible "inner light" which is the felt presence of the Eternal Spirit. And this felt presence is but the awakening of the human spirit to its own spiritual birthright and inalienable possession—its very continuity and identity with the Divine. It is the open secret of every thrilling activity of the human spirit.

Well may Mysticism be called Religion in its most concentrated form. In this state of exalted feeling, Religion and Philosophy join hands. Both conclude in Ecstasy, and in emotional natures dissolve in tears.

Pascal, the philosopher, was in the depth of his spiritual consciousness one of the humblest of

mortals, and at the same time one of the most exultant.

He was privileged to sound the gamut of the soul's richest experience, and found that, in the last resort, finite and infinite are merged in the pure unbounded joy of the human spirit. In this striking self-revelation of the dying but masterfully awake Pascal we discern a living transcript of the experience of the immediate friends and companions of Christ Himself. No single word, no single emotion, so marked the intimate personal experience of these privileged souls as this of Joy. We read constantly that His hearers and disciples "were filled with joy." Christ prayed that His own joy might remain with them, and "that their joy might be full." And the secret of it is the same everywhere. He had ushered them into a new world, a new atmosphere and consciousness of the Divine Presence and love; and it had unlocked a new depth of greatness in their own spirits, whose only emotional expression was this same joy that so invaded and overwhelmed the heart of the dying Pascal.

Now, we do not pretend that such an exalted consciousness as this is at all characteristic of our day. It is not really so of any age in the wide sense, nor continuously even of any single soul. But it is much more common to-day, we believe, than is often supposed. Our religion, and especially

perhaps our literature, already begin to be conscious of it. And, in spite of all the unrest and worldliness of our time, this joy of spirit is being hailed as within the range of calm, thoughtful experience. The sense and joy of it are beginning, like a great silent tide, to invade the hearts of humble, common men. Even Science begins to admit, "Surely the Lord is in this place and we knew it not."

The conviction of the "Continuity" we have spoken of, and which the religious spirit interprets as the suggestion of its oneness with God, is thus recognised as the very foundation of adoration and the source of an overpowering joy.

So far as this is true of our day, surely we may hail it as a "vision" worth recording, and for which we may well be profoundly thankful.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

"He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father."—JOHN xiv. 12.

IN the opening chapter we dealt exclusively with what we have called Christ's secret doctrine, and in later chapters we ventured to show how this secret doctrine has been re-discovered and adopted in various leading movements of modern thought.

It remains with us now to deal with that inseparable and characteristic element of Christ's ministry with which every reader of Scripture is familiar as His "mighty works," which everywhere accompanied His teaching. So far as Christ's own "mighty works" are concerned it is unnecessary to do more than name the fact. The most careless reader cannot fail to see that, in addition to His main work as a teacher, the most constant feature of Christ's personal activity was the healing of the sick. This was the ever-recurring form in which the well of His inner life overflowed into the lives of those about Him and shed its spiritual

power over their hearts. "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them," was His own graphic description of the "works of Christ" which John the Baptist had heard of, and about the nature of which he sent to inquire. But the amazing thing is, that Jesus not only regarded these works as matters of course, but instructed the disciples to do likewise wherever they went, and unequivocally declared, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father."

Not only so, but, as if to make a misinterpreting of His message impossible, He linked together the healing and the teaching duties. "As ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils. Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. x. 7-8).

His disciples, we read, proceeded in perfect confidence to follow His instructions, with results in nearly all cases similar to His own. We read, indeed, of one case in which they failed, and the father of the boy, in his eagerness, brushed past the disciples and appealed to Christ Himself. When the disciples, admitting their failure, asked Jesus "Why could not we cast him out?" His reply was,

“Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”

Our object in this chapter is to show that this gracious healing power, too, professes to have been re-discovered in modern life.

We refer to what has been called the Christian Science Movement, which on the face of it seems a remarkable corroboration of Christ's doctrine and mission—indeed, if thoroughly substantiated, it forms a literal concrete embodiment of it. The fact that, during the twenty years or so which have now passed since its first establishment, the movement has grown to such dimensions is in itself sufficient warrant for treating it as a movement that has come to stay, and that calls for careful estimate. It deliberately believes in the re-discovery of the lost power of healing which was undoubtedly possessed by the early Church, and was the daily accompaniment of the early Christian preaching.

Now, the critical point as to the reality of this power is to be found, not in the records of this modern Christian Science Movement, but in the facts of Christ's own ministry, and the vital question is, whether the similar works reported in the Gospels were really performed by the disciples, both while

Christ was still in the flesh and after His death. For if that was really the case, then their possibility as a human effort is established, and any subsequent question as to their continuance or reappearance is wholly one of evidence and facts. So far as Scripture is concerned, there is the same certainty of the fact in the case of the disciples as in the case of Christ Himself. Both are recorded with equal plainness, and we accept the record.

The theory often adopted, of course, is that these mighty works were performed by Christ solely in virtue of His Divine powers, and that for the special purpose of establishing His infant Church He delegated the power to His disciples and to some who immediately followed them, and that it was subsequently withdrawn. This theory, however, flies directly in the face of two broad, plain facts: (1) that Christ deliberately told His disciples, and indeed all believers, "that they would do these and greater works still"; and (2) that, if the record is to be accepted at all, these works were constantly performed by them.

Not only do the Scriptures record the constant exercise of this power, the writings of the early Fathers subsequent to the apostles are evidence of the continuance and dissemination of the gifts for nearly 300 years.

Thus we have Justin Martyr (110-163), Tertullian

the impulsive African (150–220), Origen (185–253), Cyprian (200–258), who all spoke in the same confident tone of the healing gift as an act of everyday exercise. Their writings and works, which are better authenticated than the Gospels themselves, are the continued outcome of Christ's teaching and spirit. The outcome was a great and unprecedented intensification of all the faculties, powers, and virtues of men by means of a new consciousness of, and greatly deepened sensitiveness to, the Divine inhabitation of our nature which He taught.

These facts expressly warrant our conviction that the works are done in virtue of a power which was and is potentially inherent in human nature, and that they simply require the exercise of that loving, trustful, determined faith in the Presence and Power and Grace of the Eternal Spirit to ensure their unrestricted performance.

This would naturally lead us to the consideration of the circumstantial evidence of this new Movement. The evidence of alleged facts is voluminous. We prefer to leave interested students to weigh it for themselves.

We have serious misgivings, however, not only as to Mrs. Eddy's method of endeavouring to reproduce the works of Christ and to declare the spiritual truth which underlay them, but as to her whole part in the Movement she so artfully suc-

ceeded in controlling. "The Science of being," she writes (par. No. 302), "reveals man as perfect as the Father is perfect, because the Soul of man is God, the Divine Principle of all being, and the real man is governed by Soul instead of sense, by the law of Spirit, and not of Matter." To an ordinary patient this, we submit, is not so clear, not so inspiring as it sounds. Again she writes, "Christ's miracles were based on immortal and spiritual laws—were simply the outcome of His clear and accurate knowledge of God."

We prefer to say that they were the outcome of His intense consciousness of the Infinite Love, and of the fact that that Love, being at the same time the source of all true power, was surging ever in His heart and exerting that power over the material which, analyse and explain it as we may, is the inalienable prerogative of Spirit over Matter. For man was enriched by Christ, not by anything miraculously done, but by the unveiling of a relationship to the Divine so close and intense, and so rich in its power over the hearts of men, that ordinary speech could not do full justice to it.

This whole Christian Science Movement depends, and must depend, for its success on the cultivation of that spiritually rich consciousness which we have described as oneness with the Eternal, and which in New Testament times was called being "filled with the Holy Ghost." The tone of many

of the statements of its advocates, however, strains too much after an intellectual form; and rings harshly in the ears of any one who clings to Christ's own deeply spiritual and calm, restful expressions. There is a constant and most *outré* attempt at metaphysical dogmatism, which is wholly out of place in such a connection. Mrs. Eddy, indeed, should never have attempted what she calls a "philosophy" of the movement. "Her thought," as has been said, "is nowhere constructive, is rarely indeed coherent. Toward the attainment of the practical end which she seeks, she does not employ—and is apparently incapable of employing—coherent thought. By far the most effective factor in this Christian Science practice is a self-induced state of consciousness called 'realising God.' This consciousness has nothing of the ecstatic, and need have nothing of the emotional. It is strictly an organisation of the body of consciousness, so that all radiates from the centre of 'God,' in full rich control of that supreme concept. This is the Christian Science Gnosis. And yet we must confess that in such a materialistic age Mrs. Eddy has reduced to a method, and brings to the fore, a mystical practice which, though inferior and limited in scope in comparison with the earlier Christo-centric method, yet *within its limits, works.*" Besides, we must remember that in her rambling way Mrs. Eddy herself speaks here

and there of "that recognition of Infinite Love which alone confers the healing power," so that in face of this living germ of Christ's own teaching we are not disposed to press the point too far. We are bound, however, to add, that till this recognition of Infinite Love is made more clear as the conscious source of the healing and other powers, the future of Religion does not and cannot lie with the Eddy Movement.

We don't profess to be familiar with the regular Healing method of the Christian Scientists. But we have been present at their Sunday services, and must confess we were not greatly impressed. The quiet, cold, formal reading alternately of Mrs. Eddy's volume and the Gospels, and singing of hymns, seemed an ineffective imitation of the ordinary service of a Presbyterian Church, and we felt it to be far removed from what we cannot but see was the joyous, bold behaviour of the early Christians. So overjoyed were they when they assembled together that they became ecstatic, and almost tumbled over one another in their eagerness to utter their feelings. So much so that Paul had latterly to enjoin much strict self-control. He would not have felt himself by any means at home in the cool atmosphere of this modern reproduction of his first-century churches. The strong effort at intellectual concentration, and even metaphysical formality, which is urged on the modern Christian

Science patients, however valuable as mental training, is practically beyond the capacity of ordinary people, and cannot continue to be sufficiently and readily available as the basis of a general system of healing.

If we seem to criticise unduly, it is with unfeigned regret. For nothing would give us more joy than to have in this Movement a faithful and sympathetic reproduction of the Christo-centric method and principle.

This little volume culminates in the thought that we are to-day in process of re-discovering the Master's method and secret. The Christian Science Movement has the unprecedented distinction of introducing to the modern world this re-discovery and re-application of Christ's teaching and healing combination, and it must be the keen desire of every true Christian that the Movement should adhere faithfully to the spirit and teaching of Christ, and thus prove to be the genuine revivification of the ancient joyful practice.

We do not cavil at this Movement assuming the name of *Christian Science*. So clearly did Mrs. Eddy recognise the warrant for the title that she says bluntly (par. 313), "Jesus of Nazareth was the most scientific man that ever trod the globe."

Science is based on Law, and this Healing power is the quite natural and orderly outcome and expression of the law which illustrates the great

hierarchy of all life, visible and invisible, material and spiritual alike.

The great fact of Continuity which runs through the whole universe is the link which binds the higher everywhere with the lower, and nowhere so vitally as in the outflow of the Highest of all.

Our purpose here, however, has been to set forth not the working details of Christian Healing as Science, but the link which connects the intense spiritual consciousness of Jesus with the constant manifestation on His own part, and on that of His disciples, of this wondrous and gracious power of Healing and the other gifts which accompanied it.

As has been well said, "Jesus did not shrink from the consequences of His teaching. If God who made the world was not in fact remote, but in the heart of man, so that man was nothing more than the medium through which God worked, then it followed inevitably that man's power over Nature was limitless. He could heal the sick, raise the dead, and walk the waters, and in fact it is recorded that Jesus manifested in Himself these natural powers, while adding that all men could manifest them and work the same or even greater works, upon the solitary condition of faith.

"Man, in a word, came under a new category. He was now essentially distinguished from all who went before him—earlier man—animal—vegetable. He was a spirit, no longer dependent merely on

matter for the sustenance of his spiritual life—a life in which material things would play always a diminishing part.”

“‘As all roads lead to Rome,’ so all studies nowadays seem to lead to the unseen and spiritual.

“The Church may be about to realise that if the days of miracles in the New Testament sense of the word are past, *they ought not to be*.

“At any rate in a notable work, *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*, by Professor A. G. Hogg, Madras, it is demonstrated by full and cautious exegesis that Christ meant the gifts of healing to be not the temporary possession of the Church, but its permanent comfort and glory. When a cause is waxing in strength it compels even its enemies to bring gifts, and one is almost tempted to say that Science, without intending it, is doing something to prepare for Christian Science.

“For does she not declare that Matter slips ghostlike from under her investigating fingers, its seeming solid substance dissolved into electrons—force—an enigmatic something which is not Matter at all? ‘Verily,’ as Mr. Balfour has said, ‘we now explain Matter by explaining it away.’ The materialistic and idealistic interpretations of the Universe have shouted defiance at each other down the ages, but, since the elephant cannot fight the whale, they have not managed decisively to settle their respective claims,

"But this may be the age of more than one Armageddon." ¹

One other word of necessary criticism before we close.

The practice, more or less common to-day among the members of the Christian Science Church, of giving and receiving money payment for the exercise of the gift is surely a degradation of it. Such conduct as this in such a connection incurs the same condemnation as did "Simon the Sorcerer," who offered the Apostles money that he too might receive the gift, and at once received from Peter the scathing rebuke, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." A gift that cannot be bought cannot be sold. There is a distinct danger of the healing movement attempting to enter into money competition with the ordinary medical profession, and thus not only losing its spiritual meaning and dignity, but forfeiting the power altogether.

¹ From notice of *Christian Science*, by James McKechnie.

CHAPTER V

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AND THEOSOPHY

“KNOW THYSELF”

“If the doors of Perception were cleansed, everything would appear, as it is, Infinite.”—BERGSON.

ANOTHER branch of investigation which was, we may say, forced on our modern thinkers by the spread of what is known as Spiritualism has led to an endeavour to understand its phenomena and to affiliate them to our ordered knowledge.

The result was the formation, by many of our most prominent thinkers and leading men, of the society known as the Psychical Research Society.

This Society has devoted over twenty years of laborious investigation, during which it has covered many thousands of individual experiences. Owing largely to the genius and labour of the late F. W. H. Myers, its Honorary Secretary, the conclusion was finally arrived at that there is all around us a region which they called the Sub-Conscious or Sub-Liminal, or, as it may be called with equal propriety, the Supra-Conscious or Supra-Liminal. The fundamental idea is that

our own every-day working consciousness is but a small segregated part of a great sea or atmosphere of consciousness all about us, which in certain states or individuals is accessible, and yields inrushes or uprushes of fresh thought and feeling into our normal consciousness.

The whole subject of the Sub-Liminal and its ramifications is so linked in its spirit to the activity which we speak of as the Mystical that it may be quite fittingly treated as kin with the more generic doctrine of Continuity.

The essence of its teaching is that we are continuous with what at least seems to be a Universal Consciousness, and that access to that universal consciousness, even if it seem to be limited to certain individuals with strong natural susceptibilities to it which enable them to contact it more or less intelligibly for our benefit, is certainly, so as far it goes, strikingly corroborative of the main Thesis which we here seek to emphasise.

It is worth noting that the phenomena to which the origination of the Society was due were endlessly varied, and as difficult of classification as the mental capacities and characteristics of the various actors in the scenes and incidents on record.

The main difficulty, indeed, was that of distinguishing between what was objective and what was subjective. It is this fact that brings into

such bold relief the scientific method of the Society's work.

The Society has not pretended to deny the somewhat erratic facts of the Spiritualist seances, etc., that were so plentiful.

On the contrary, one of the Society's most prominent scientific members (Sir Oliver Lodge) has forced the Spiritualist interpretation again on the notice of the reading and thinking public by openly stating, quite recently, that he regularly speaks with departed friends, and can do so with as much certainty as with his friends here face to face.

Further light on all this may yet be reached. But it is something substantial gained to have evolved a form of thought on the subject that is capable of finding room for all these various phenomena, and of affiliating them to our general view of the cosmos.

To us here the moot points between the Psychical Research Society and its Spiritualist critics are relatively unimportant.

What we wish to emphasise as having a direct bearing on our present object is the conception on which its labours have finally rested, viz. the circumambient consciousness in which our own consciousness lives and moves and has its being.

This form of thought is a remarkable scientific psychological corroboration of the whole tenor of

our present argument, and it leads quite naturally to the consideration of yet another, which it is impossible to call a purely modern movement, seeing its adherents claim for it an age coeval with the whole history of man.

But it is thoroughly modern in this respect, that it professes to have deliberately reserved its public appearance on the modern stage, out of consideration for the weakness and unpreparedness of the modern religious world to receive the strong meat of its full teaching.

Its leaders, however, we can hardly be surprised to hear, have within the last half-century or so decided that the time was ripe for their long-delayed action. And already they are able to claim that "the Theosophic Movement has struck its roots into almost every country all over the civilised world."

We have no intention, nor have we any occasion, to enter here on any, however imperfect, exposition of the teaching of Theosophy. Enough to say that that teaching is the very apotheosis of evolution.

It teaches, in fact, that between the humblest created thing and the Eternal Spirit of the Universe the distinction is essentially one of degree and not of kind. Everything is continuous. This implies the very same principle that is expressed spiritually in the secret doctrine of Christ, viz. the union of the Divine and the human.

Theosophy is at the same time essentially empirical. It is the accumulated outcome of psychological observation and introspection. In this respect its work is on similar lines to that of the Psychical Research Society, with this tremendous advantage, that, by the exercise of certain higher faculties which it professes to have attained to, it already sees and knows all the possible results of that Society's work.

Both, however, are guided by a common faith in the complete continuity of the material studied, and of the human powers thus turned to account. Theosophy may be succinctly described as the endeavour to teach the thought of, and indeed to map out the details of, the *Divine Process of the Universe*.

There is a striking parallelism between its teaching on the Origin of the Soul and the latest teaching of Science as to the Origin of Matter as known to our present senses.

For example, Theosophy teaches a universal consciousness and regards the soul as its concentration into single conscious individualities, while latest science speaks of the condensation of the primal substance into more and more concrete forms of what we speak of as Matter.

The distinction may be brought nearer to our human life by saying that Theosophy is the gnostic or knowledge side of our inner vision of

the Universe, while Religion is the spiritual and emotional side. The one furnishes the intellect, the other invades and fills the heart.

We shall not enlarge in further detail. The literature of the movement is ample and readily available. Our object is simply to cite it, so far as it bulks in our modern thought and life, as further evidence of the principles contained in the secret doctrine of Jesus—as indeed one of the boldest and most uncompromising phases of Modern Mysticism, and at the same time one of the most empirical phenomena of our times.

We make but one additional remark. It is surely a striking compliment (if we may use the word) to the philosophic catholicity of the Theosophic Movement to find that its distinctive teaching of the nature of what are called the Akasa and the Akasic records corresponds so remarkably with modern thought. We find, for example, one of our leading recent psychologists, Professor Wm. James, when referring to the teaching of the Psychical Research Society, speaking thus—

“The transmarginal or subliminal region is obviously the larger part of each of us, for it is the abode of everything that is latent, and the reservoir of everything that passes unrecorded or unobserved. It harbours the springs of all our obscurely motivated passions, impulses, dislikes, prejudices, our intentions, hypotheses, fancies,

superstitions, persuasions, convictions, and in general all our non-rational operations come from it."

Thus do ancient wisdom and latest science begin to find their common points of agreement; and thus is the deepest truth of Christ's inner experience seen to be all-embracing.

CHAPTER VI

THE ANÆSTHETIC REVELATION AND ITS PROPHECY, BENJAMIN PAUL BLOOD

“I am not so hopeless of the words, if the facts may attain scientific recognition.”—B. P. BLOOD.

WHAT has hitherto been said has been on quite general lines. Fortunately we have, in our own day, a vivid and even daring illustration of Ecstasy from individual experience. Mr. Benjamin Paul Blood, to whom I refer, was not drawn to the study of Ecstasy either from any special predisposition to Mysticism or through any prolonged investigation of the subject dealt with by the Psychical Research Society. He was led to it first of all, accidentally, through the necessity of Anæsthetic treatment during bodily injury. He was led to continue it regularly of his own free act, during thirty years thereafter, with the sole purpose of studying and, if possible, recording what passed through his consciousness during these various periods of Anæsthesia.

Our own special interest in the Revelation and its author began immediately after the appear-

ance of Professor Wm. James's article entitled "A Pluralistic Mystic," in the *Hibbert Journal* of 1910. To explain fully that interest would be to write a biography.

Professor James's article called public attention in a striking way to Mr. Blood and his writings, and showed him to be probably one of the most remarkable combinations on record of the trained and subtle thinker, the deeply read philosopher, and the spiritual Mystic.

It is the results of his long experiments, and his constantly renewed endeavour to "fix" and record the experiences he went through, that have given rise to his own phrase—"The Anæsthetic Revelation." And it is this experience recorded (and still to be recorded) that at last induced his friend, Professor James, to appeal to him on the subject, and to eulogise his name and his work in so arresting a manner.

The question that interests us here is whether and in what way the Anæsthetic Revelation is affiliated to, or in any way corroborates, the secret doctrine of Christ.

A preliminary objection may naturally be raised as to the validity, and even the propriety, of attempting any such method of Revelation. It may be dubbed an artificial attempt to "short circuit" the access to the unseen.

But independently of the fact that it was

originally suggested by Mr. Blood's own unlooked-for experience, it is not easy to point to any radical difference between his and the time-honoured method of the mystics and ascetics of all types. The whole Yoga system of India is simply a carefully elaborated method of reaching the same goal, and relies on physical mediation of various kinds.¹ The respective times and details are but secondary.

The much-revered oracles of the ancient Greek religion were originally quickened by somewhat similar helps. Anæsthetic fumes were not unknown even at Delphi.

In the spirit of the extract which heads this chapter, Mr. Blood has taken in hand to record his own experience, and, as he has authorised the use of the material here cited, we shall allow him to speak for himself.

“There is [he says] an invariable and reliable condition (or uncondition) ensuing about the instant of recall from the Anæsthetic stupor to ‘coming to,’ in which the genius of being is revealed. No words may express the imposing certainty of the patient that he is realising the primordial Adamic surprise of life. Repetition of

¹ It is surely a striking coincidence that in Christ's own injunction, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me,” the same ancient word of Sanscrit origin survives, *Zugon Jugum*, Yoke.

the experience finds it ever the same, and as if it could not possibly be otherwise. The subject resumes his normal consciousness only to partially and fitfully remember its occurrence, and to try to formulate its baffling import—with but this consolatory after-thought, that he has known the oldest truth, and that he has done with human theories as to the origin, meaning, or destiny of the race. He is beyond instruction in ‘spiritual things.’

“It is the instant contrast of this ‘tasteless water of souls’ with formal thought as we ‘come to’ that leaves in the patient an astonishment that the awful mystery of Life is at last but a homely and common thing, and that, aside from mere formality, the majestic and the absurd are of equal dignity. The astonishment is aggravated as at a thing ‘of course,’ missed by sanity in overstepping, as in too foreign a search, or with too eager an attention, as in finding one’s spectacles on one’s nose, or in making in the dark a step higher than the stair. My first experience of the revelation had many varieties of emotion; but as a man grows calm and determined by experience in general, so am I now not only firm and familiar in this once weird condition, but triumphant, divine. To minds of sanguine imagination there will be a sadness in the tenor of the mystery, as if the keynote of the universe was low; for no

poetry, no emotion known to the normal sanity of man, can furnish a hint of its primeval prestige, and its all-but appalling solemnity; but for such as have felt sadly the instability of temporal things there is a comfort of serenity and ancient peace; while for the resolved and imperious spirit there are majesty and serenity unspeakable. Nor can it be long until all who enter the anæsthetic condition (and there are hundreds every secular day) will be taught to expect this revelation, and will date from its experience their initiation into the Secret of Life.

“ This has been my moral sustenance ever since I have known of it. In my first printed mention of it I declared: ‘ The world is no more the alien terror that was taught me. Spurning the cloud-grimed and still sultry battlements whence so lately Jehovan thunders boomed, my grey gull lifts her wing against the nightfall, and takes the dim leagues with a fearless eye.’ And now, after thirty years of this experience, the wing is greyer, but the eye is fearless still, while I renew and doubly emphasise that declaration. I know, as having known, the meaning of Existence, the sane centre of the Universe—at once the wonder and the assurance of the soul.”

A propos of this extract, we confidently challenge the production of its like, both for matter and for manner, from any modern literature.

How far Mr. Blood may have been really able, during the experience itself, to differentiate between the various phases (if phases indeed there were) of momentary illumination which may have flitted through his spirit, it is of course impossible for an outsider to imagine. But when the revelation impinges on and proposes to affect philosophic thought, challenge and question are inevitable and wholly justified. Now the defined metaphysical essence of this Anæsthetic Revelation, so far as yet reduced to words, is in the following sentences.

“The monistic notion of a Oneness, a centred wholeness, ultimate purpose, or climacteric result of the world *has wholly given way*. Thought evolves no longer a centred whole, a One, but rather a numberless many, adjust it how we will.”

This is the philosophical and metaphysical crux of the whole “Revelation,” and, whatever it may ultimately achieve, it meantime defiantly throws us back on a problem, or rather a doctrine and postulate never before challenged, in even the vaguest manner, by at least any European philosophy or religion. What are we to make of it? The first question we naturally put to ourselves is, Can such a thought as this be made to fit into any ordered conception of reality as known to us? With the time-honoured thought and faith of the

past it is wholly irreconcilable. With whatever variety of formal statement, the ages of the past have almost invariably entrenched themselves in that great fortress of their faith, the Unity of the Eternal Being. But in view of the marvellous investigations and discoveries, scientific and psychological alike, of our own age, we are bound to consider and ask ourselves whether these studies, external and empirical though they be, do not afford at least some analogical clue to this new and astounding doctrine of Pluralism as distinguished from Unity. The Universe is embodied Reason, and that Reason will be found to realise and express itself with equal clearness in every possible domain of human investigation.

In the realm of physical nature few things are more striking than the eager and prolonged search in our day for the original elements—the ultimate form of Matter. In the end physicists have discovered and declared that concrete Matter, big or little, is not a definite and divisible or indivisible entity at all, but simply a *centre of physical force*—the obvious conclusion being that the material universe is nothing but an infinite aggregate of such centres. As a scientist of to-day says, “We thus strike on the very curious and startling fact that, as far as we can see, every cell in every organism throughout the world of life contains all the elements of the whole being to which it belongs,

and is potentially that being" (T. W. Rolleston, *Parallel Paths*: Duckworth, 1908).

Matter and Energy thus blend into one another, which is tantamount to saying that the material and the immaterial meet and are continuous. For this word Energy, which is admittedly the last word of the scientist, is but the first word of the metaphysician. And we can hardly imagine a more accurately expressed common term for both physics and metaphysics. This "explaining away"—this disappearance, that is to say, of the bitter, but, from the ontological point of view, really superficial controversy over "Mind and Matter," is the point or stage in modern thought where the doctrine of Pluralism comes into view. The Dualism of Mind and Matter is left behind, and we are face to face with the deeper problem of Unity and Pluralism.

Here we pass beyond the direct influence of the lower analogies of material nature, and enter a region "whose confine," as Dante says, "is Light and Love," its atmosphere Emotion and Vision, and its one descriptive word, "Union with the Eternal."

Nor can we conceive any analogue, more complete and overflowing with the whole weight of physical science, of the corresponding truth in the unseen universe.

Man, in the light of this analogy, is not a per-

manently separate individual entity, but, on the contrary, simply a little centre of spiritual force, and the entire spiritual universe simply a great aggregate of such spiritual centres, having in itself neither centre nor circumference. And after all, as Mr. Blood says, "What difference does it make in the placing of this mystery of origin and power (which confessedly no one understands) whether you give it all to an abstract and inconceivable One, all-knowing and all-doing, or distribute the same originality among us free and responsible creatures, who may go up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and, if the world is bad, bear a hand at making it better?"

But indeed there is no end to the analogies and suggestions of our latest physical science. Not only is objective concrete matter declared to be, in the last analysis, simply a congeries of centres of physical force; each of these centres is declared by latest science to be, in its inherent constitution, a unique *alter ego* of the great solar and other systems to which it belongs. Discoveries such as this, in a region so far beyond the reach of the most powerful microscope, are to the unskilled observer only conceivable as the outcome of high scientific imagination, but there they are, and the net result is that the minutest conceivable molecule of matter is found to be in every layer of its being, a perfect reproduction in miniature of

the rolling heaven itself. Just as every cell is potentially the whole being to which it belongs, so, *mutatis mutandis*, and by heaven's own law of analogy, each human soul contains all the elements of the Cosmos to which it belongs, and is potentially that Cosmos. The infinitely great and the infinitely little are linked together by the bond of an absolutely common nature and function, and the very multiplicity of the universe is seen, after all, to be realised in a yet higher and more pregnant conception than that of either number or individuality.

This deeper unity is fully appreciable, of course, only in and by the human spirit, which itself in our inner being is its highest embodiment. "The living universe of our experience is not a Being, but an acting and a Becoming," or, as another writer puts it, "To the Mystic uprush, Theistic belief is not an essential, as Buddhist Mysticism shows. Religion, at least in its more general aspect, is not necessarily associated with any particular intellectual conception." And thus we are helped finally to descry perhaps a brighter light still in this pluralistic doctrine. It is a light whose function may ere long be seen to be that of opening the door to a new and more spacious conception of the very nature of spirit. It may prove to be the first letter of a new alphabet of the spirit, and a new era in the religion of "the

spirit," reaching out to aspirations and assimilations beyond all previous reckoning. As Wm. James said, " Let radical empiricism once become associated with religion, as hitherto, through some strange misunderstanding, it has been associated with irreligion, and I believe that a new era of religion, as well as of philosophy, will be ready to begin " (*A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 314).

The point involved is both metaphysical and spiritual. It brings us to the borderland of both these planes of consciousness. Metaphysically the pluralistic idea may be called symbolic of pure absolute Being; whereas when we descend on a definite assertion, such as that even of Unity, we step down into the region of intellectual concepts. A definite assertion of Unity is, strictly speaking, an intellectual attempt to define the indefinable, whereas when we retire from the region of positive intellectual assertions, we enter on the calm, restful enjoyment of the Divine Presence, and thus realise the true Oneness with the Eternal which was the inner secret of Christ's essential teaching.

Mr. Blood also indicated his thought more intimately in a prolonged correspondence with which he favoured the present writer, and of which the following are the first two letters.

The reference in the first is to a booklet entitled *Haeckel's Contribution to Religion*, which was sent to him by way of introduction.

After some eulogistic remarks he proceeds—

“ I follow it perfectly, and where I might venture to differ I see ample room for two. Just a shade of difference I may indicate in what poor James would have called our ‘ vision.’ All that you infer as God, with the capital G, is to me *secular* and ‘ lower case,’ and I have no expectation, for myself or the race, of achieving a unity, personality, or absolute perspective of the world. There is so much in it and of it that neither I nor my father and mother ever had anything to do with; there is so much being discovered that we might as well have known, and there is no jealousy of our knowing it all, and then what? There is no science nor purpose in the Revelation—‘ little of this great world can it speak ’—simple staring at a self-evident wonder whose inevitableness makes its importance sardonic and fearfully absurd. *Think* it out and it comes to that—for if you had the world, what would you care for it, or do with it? Your enemies all dead and gone, your follies forgiven—charged up to the environment, and only ‘ itching and scratching ’ to divert the future? ‘ Cui bono ? ’ is a searching question to answer on an empty stomach, eighty years old; there is only the perfect courage as the lesson of it all, and temperance grows stale, and wisdom ceases to congratulate itself when fear and care have passed. Of course one can turn back with

Omar, and have it out again, and so he surely will; but he must moralise once in a while.

“This Anæsthetic Revelation will surely knit itself into every man’s mental garniture in time. As patients report it, it will not make a creed of its own, but it will weaken others. This printed matter is in its present form only to exploit its publication. When it gets published I shall give myself the pleasure of partly repaying your kindness in more permanent binding. In the meantime I shall speak well of you, for I beg you will credit me with very high regard.”

The following is the reply to this letter.

“DEAR MR. BLOOD,

“I am much gratified and interested to receive your letter and enclosure of 18th March, and I note carefully all that you say.

“I feel at the same time much honoured by your appreciation of the little book I sent you, and I know that you will understand, and if necessary overlook any apparent presumption in what I am about to say.

“There is one leading sentence in your letter which I must honestly say has given me the coldest intellectual and even spiritual douche I have ever received since, nearly fifty years ago, I first read Comte’s *Positive Philosophy* (and at first sight one does not look for this from a Mystic).

“ I refer to the sentence which runs thus—

“ ‘I have no expectation, for myself or the race, of achieving a Unity, personality, or absolute perspective of the world.’

“ In Comte’s apparently absolutely materialistic naturalism I instinctively felt there must be a truth. I never came across a writer who so completely met my own native passion for generalisation, and it was not long till, in view of his unflinching sincerity, I overcame any dread I had felt.

“ But the climax of all generalisation is Unity, and it is the sense of this Unity that has been ever since my intellectual sheet-anchor.

“ I have an Oxford friend, an ex-clergyman of the Church of England, who long since renounced not only Church but religion in every form. He avowed himself to me first as an Atheist, then, after some colloquy, as a Materialist. At our final colloquy he admitted he was a Monist. ‘Give me your hand,’ I said, ‘we are one, the man who recognises Unity recognises God. The particular name he gives it is but metaphor.’

“ And here you are, apparently pulling up my best bower and venturing adrift on the trackless sea of unreason.

“ Now I don’t forget that, so far as the Anæsthetic Revelation has been attained, you speak from a vantage-ground to which mere argument is

of small moment. But in my case the conviction of this Unity has long since passed the region of argument. I feel it to be part of my very self, and that the greater self—the Atman, as our Aryan forbears found it to be—is only conceivable, or rather contacted, by means of this, our own self or Atman.

“That in some way or other even this unity may be but ‘lower case’ is possible, I suppose. But the dream of that Unity which has fired the whole mystic race, and which the Mystic Paul called ‘glued to the Lord as one spirit,’ is a dream with which I for one would fain cross the border, confident that in that ineffable form at least I shall ‘see my Pilot face to face.’ In what your word ‘achieving’ may cover we are perhaps at one, and in any case we run up against the master knot which unaided intellect is insufficient to untie.

“But I forbear. You will forgive these too hasty words. I look forward to your matured expression with keenest interest, and cannot too heartily thank you for your kindness.”

I am tempted to add the following for the sake of its graphic vigour of style.

January 13th, 1913.

“I got the *Westminster Review* this morning (I hope from you) with your ‘Rag of faith.’ As Roosevelt would say, ‘Bully for you!’

"I doubt of the remnant affording the sartorial outfit that your final sentence anticipates, but of course you have to acknowledge the shadow of the Establishment, with less than courtesy to which you would not be listened to at all. 'Twas ever thus.'

"Kant's whole second story of the practical judgment as founded in 'freedom' was a mere complaisance to German Lutheranism, although Luther himself had said, 'You can draw no logical inference from ought to can.'

"*Freedom* is no *principle*—it can mean only exemption from pressure or intrusion, it has no fertility, invention, initiative, or any originality at all. Especially courteous is your mention of the Catholic Church.

"I don't know if it has brains enough to see how like 'a great admiral'—his tall masts tipped with light—she comes bearing grandly down with the ark and the Evangels, or how the Mother, who stood by at the birth-throes of nearly all the institutions left standing among men, from beneath her grey hood may yet murmur the 'pax vobiscum' over them all.

"You are perfectly clear and 'right on time' in your vision and forecast of the perplexity of the Establishment in adjusting Orthodoxy to ineluctable Progress.

"If you are committed with the regulars, I will

say 'Stand by the guns,' the air is full of smoke and dust, but 'Steady does it,' warns the grey sergeant on the firing line.

"I am very tender about Jesus, and I would rejoice in any interpretation which would save His prestige entire. Something of His seems to adumbrate the last phase of every speculation. For instance now, in M. Bergson's fad of reaching into Intuition and Instinct for the inarticulate expression of Life and the 'activity situations' generally, is not all this prefigured in the saying, 'If any man will do the will he shall know of the doctrine'? And in all Scripture, where 'the heart' represents the head, the same is inferred."

In any case Mr. Blood is a confirmed Pluralist, and the only conclusion we can come to is that the fully quickened spiritual consciousness is independent of particular forms of thought. For the practical purposes of the religious life man's sense of identity or union with the Eternal can only be profitable as worship or love of a Person, in essential respects felt to be kin with our own. From the philosophical and ontological point of view this identity with the Eternal has no strong need for this Personal conception. The human spirit is itself part and parcel of the Universal Spirit. The "full consciousness of our own souls" is therefore consciousness of the Eternal. In this form we

come into direct touch with the consciousness which Christ entered into, and which He spoke of as Oneness with the Father. The Mystic, of all men, is not called on nor disposed to dogmatise on such matters. As matter of fact, the Mystic's theology has been in the main typical of the thought of their day, and here and there, as in Boehme's case, the form of their utterances has even been inconsistent with the real spirit of their vision of truth.

Mr. Blood's Pluralistic vision may therefore be safely left to the verdict of time. The spiritual life remains unaffected, and Christ's deep spiritual consciousness may be trusted to provide shelter for very varying forms of intellectual expression.

Man and the Universe

CHAPTER VII

MAN'S PLACE IN THE HIERARCHY OF NATURE

“There's not a man
That lives who hath not had his Godlike hours,
And feels not what an empire we inherit
As natural beings, in the very strength of Nature.”

WORDSWORTH.

“Man is not man as yet,
All tended to Mankind,
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God.”—*Paracelsus*.

“The Transfiguration was the beginning of a new form of Ecstasy, and of profound spiritual Vision.”—ED. SCHURÉ.

“Thus the Universe is one vast Cosmic Process of Humanity moving on to its goal, where is attained an all-embracing Unity of Consciousness.”—ROYCE.

Is it madness to conceive of the true philosophy of Life as wrapped up in the mystic teaching of Scripture? Is it folly to believe that Jesus Christ knew more of the hidden depths of Life than the man in the street, or even than the Rabbis in the Temple? The question even thus stated answers itself, for the question is, What is human nature really capable of? And this question can be answered only by human nature's own experience. There is no secret of the Divine that is not blazoned

in the human life. This means that man himself is not only truly human, but truly Divine. Wild as the thought seems in the eye of orthodoxy, this is the only thought that makes the Universe itself in the last resort intelligible.

This, however, may be called mere *a priori* assumption. Let us test it then by fact. Let us bring it to the test of the supreme teachers of the doctrine. Let us question the men who most profoundly knew our nature, had most deeply thought over and sounded it. What does Christ say on the subject? You will find in His words no fine-spun or clearly stated definition of man's true being. But if you take His words and acts as you find them, and cavil not at their seeming implications, take them in their face meaning, however startling, they will be found to be a revelation in the deepest sense possible to man. Man's elaborate philosophies have been but a jingle of incompatible phrases that could not be rationally dovetailed into universal fact. Christ was the supremest mystic the world has known. He saw what other men have laboured in vain to express. He was the great Way-shower, "the Way, the Truth, the Life"; that is to say, the Truth He came to teach could be taught only by a Life. And the highest way that highest Man could show was such a life as He led.

What, then, was that Life? As a matter of

recorded facts, the first acts of His mature life were what He called "His Father's business," healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, casting out demons—making God's world, in short, more as God would have it to be. He exerted power over material things that was practically unknown among men. And surely the marvel and commanding secret of His career for us was His telling His disciples to "go and do likewise," assuring them that "these works shall ye do, and greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father." That is to say, He vindicated this power over Nature as a human prerogative. The command, coupled with the "virtue" that went out of Him, roused the same power, the same "virtue," in them. They, in fact, at once did as He did, and went about in a state of mind for which they had no word but the simple word "joy." Their spirits had touched the Divine and sprung into a newness of life. This power and its exercise revealed themselves to themselves, and became the crowning feature of their lives. They became "new creatures." Life widened its bounds. Joy shone in every face. Their spirits were enlarged. Onlookers were amazed to think that "God had given such power to men." They themselves thanked and glorified God.

Now, speaking broadly, this display of power was a new thing among men. But it was a most

real thing. And it was maintained in active force for over 300 years. It established itself, in short, as a new fact and feature of loyal and serious human life. It glorifies our own conception of the nature we wear, and we boldly claim it as the main demonstration of the real grandeur of human nature.

But, on the very face of it, it was but partial. Partial in the fact of its relatively short duration, and partial therefore, we are apt to say, as the basis for the claim and proof of our Divinity. But if partial, it was partial in a still nobler sense. For it was the partial evidence—the first-fruits—the earnest of our full potentialities. If man is really Divine he cannot stop short at such an apparent breakdown of his power. As long as Christ remained among them the power was at its height, and though, as history tells us, there came a time when the display of the power seemed to cease, the fact of its possession and of its more or less spasmodic exercise remained. Man's power had been vindicated. But there was more and greater to follow. So much greater that while the Master remained it was necessary that man's initiation into larger powers and greater mysteries should be begun. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Man was to be initiated into a closeness and nearness of communion of which even Christ's marvellous

healing power can hardly be said to have given any adequate indication. *Mirabile dictu!* Man was privileged at last to "see God and live."

In order to train them for the real potentialities of their being that still awaited them, "Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him." This amazing experience is told with the same familiar directness as is the rest of His life's story. We accept it as a literal, unadorned record of an experience that in truth needed and admitted of no adornment. And while we find that the disciple who, as we know otherwise, understood it best, and, we cannot doubt, was a fitting companion to his Master at that strange time, records little or nothing of his own share in the scene, the facts are vouched for by the others, and are told as usual with the utmost modesty and simplicity, and they are recorded for our learning—nay, they are recorded for our example. And here we have a new stepping-stone into the inner secret of man's being and powers.

It is now that we are introduced to the first really progressive step in the history of the Church. Hitherto, throughout the first century and a half

of the Christian era, the life of the Church may fitly be called the simple consciousness of joy. Childlike joy in the spirit of their Master had hitherto naturally sufficed them, but the mistaken anticipation of His early reappearing had at last begun to die away. The life of the Church became steadily self-conscious. The necessity was felt for the vindication to themselves of this precious possession of theirs. To be sure even of preserving it, it had to be defended—defended not only in the face of a hostile world, but defended and defined as well as they could to their own hearts.

The Church, in short, began to need thinkers. The unparalleled spiritual experience through which the Church had passed compelled the growth of introspection, and forced on their thoughts the question, What could such an experience imply and suggest as to the nature with which they were endowed? What message had it to the world at large?

The most helpful and reasonable suggestion which the history of the Church has ever made in this connection, fortunately, was made by one who was familiar by actual experience with the life of these early centuries.

Origen lived and wrote in the early part of the fourth century, while the healing and other powers were still in daily exercise,

Even the Canon of Scripture which records the astonishing life of the times was still in more or less plastic condition. That is to say, the crust of verbal definition and authoritative doctrine had not yet been formed. Origen himself was a Greek, and, though unfortunately most of his writing and commentaries have perished or been destroyed, enough remains to testify to the vigour of his intellect, the charm of his character, and the courage of his utterances. He was, in fact, the first of our Christian Rationalists, using that word in its best and finest Christian sense. He naturally felt impelled to study the marvellous story of the Transfiguration, or Metamorphosis (to use its true and more familiar Greek name). He asked himself how it was possible, if at all, to reconcile the facts of this change of form with what else he knew of human life.

And the suggestive conclusion he reached, partly no doubt by the prompting of his clear reason, but mainly, may we not say, by the instinctive response of his growing spiritual insight, was that, *pari passu* with the growing spiritualisation of Christ's inner nature, there had proceeded that etherealisation of His body that became effective and visible in the act and process of Transfiguration. Here, in fact, we cannot but believe, was one of the most pregnant disclosures in the inherent relationship of the human and the Divine,

The hierarchy of Nature is so inter-related, and the ties binding spirit and body so close, that the raising of either in the scale reacts upon and influences the other directly and immediately.

Origen may have stood alone in his illuminating view of the special spiritual link between the human and the Divine; he by no means stood alone in the great fact to which it pointed. The proclamation of the fact was almost a commonplace of the earliest Christian history.

Clement, his contemporary, was full of it, for, while it is easy to find throughout his writings conflicting statements, he never loses sight of this necessarily paramount thought, and recurs very frequently to it, showing how it had mastered him, as, *e. g.*, "the Word is made man that we may learn from man how man may become God" (page 13, writings of Clement). Well might Heraclitus say, "Men are gods, gods are men." The Word itself is an apparent, *i. e.* a manifested, mystery, "God is man and man God" (page 91).

The Gnostic (or Elect) Christian "imitates Christ as far as possible for man, putting on in a certain degree the qualities of the Lord that he may be assimilated to God. He actually becomes God. He is Divine and Holy, being God, and borne or inspired by God. He is a God walking in the flesh" (pages 2-3). This is removed *toto cælo* from the ancient heathen com-

munity of Gods and men, which was but its glimmering shadow, with little or no moral fire in it for man.

Such burning language as this, so near the fountain of Christian teaching, may seem to be beyond all rational interpretation, but it is a challenge that cannot be ignored. May not the fundamental truth be that the paradox is only apparent? that the human is generically one with the Divine? that the Impersonal and the Personal are as closely linked in our own spirits as they are in the Eternal, of whom they are a copy? Is this not the unquestionable feature of our being that Paul falls back on when he realised the Divine Presence in his own spirit, and reverently but proudly spoke of it as "I, yet not I"? At every moment Paul felt this unique duality of his being, which nevertheless he rejoiced to know was essentially one with the Eternal Christ Himself. If this be so, it helps us to see how even the psychological anomaly disappears, and we learn to understand and reverence the astonishing prominence which this doctrine of the unity of the Divine and the human held among the early Christian writers. We cannot be surprised to see it reappear in our own very latest writers.

"Our unifying consciousness," says Dr. Royce, "is the type and copy of the all-unifying consciousness of God." So sharply did Paul differen-

tiate these two extremes of his own nature that, when referring to his visions and revelations, he says : " Of such an one will I glory, but of myself I will not."

Let no man object that this is merely vague Pantheism. Without falling back on Carlyle's contemptuous *Pot*-theistic retort, hereby is the very essence of the Eternal brought down and near to us, and ourselves glorified and quickened by it. And it is, in practice, of the very essence of this truth that our dearest and holiest work-a-day conception of it is that of an Eternal Person in all the glory and at the same time homely everyday reality of that pregnant word. Our working thought of it, in fact, must with all the bold confidence of our whole nature reach out on the one hand to the Infinite fountain of our being, and on the other hand *in* towards the equally unfathomable depth of our apparently weak and even timid being, to that Eternal " I, yet not I," whose realisation is the never-to-be-exhausted spiritual reward and prerogative of our Divine nature.

And we are not left in doubt as to the nature and character of this Eternal Spirit. The whole analogy of the visible constitution of things (and has man any more reliable warrant?) shows us how inseparably each tiny atom of the Universe is linked on and bound up with every other by a

law—a force—an inherent mutual attraction, that has no adequate name or analogue but that which we instinctively recognise as Love.

It is here, in the last resort, that we find how marvellously the great and the little, the visible and the invisible, are together bound up in the same great bundle of life, and all mutually inseparable and mutually dependent.

The Unity, in short, is the Unity of Love. That Divine Spirit of Love wells up in every noble and humble life, and is instinctively felt to be itself “the evidence of things not seen,” and Religion is seen to be as Divine and life-giving “in the cup of cold water” as in the most self-sacrificing act recorded of man.

But to return. The three disciples who were favoured with this high experience of Transfiguration were the very men who were most like the Master Himself, and had advanced furthest in the spiritual life, and shared most keenly the feelings and aspirations of His daily consecrated life. At the moment they did not understand fully what was going on in their Master’s spirit, or even apparently in their own.

But from what did take place we can see that the experience of that day was an intentional and solemn preparation for the more marvellous experience still, that was shortly to be theirs. For when they showed, as immediately after the

experience they could not avoid showing, their utter amazement, the Master warned them solemnly to "tell no man till the Son of Man should be raised from the dead."

That is to say, nearing the end of His earthly career as He was, and realising how vital it was to the future both of His Church and the world, that a wide conviction on their own part and a steadily growing witness for the world should be established, of the nature of His work and mission here, and of the deeply spiritual methods by which it was gradually to be spread among men, He determined to demonstrate it in the most open manner possible.

He went on his way, therefore, facing scorn and death, and in the final issue, as we read, showed that, to use His own words, He Himself was "the Resurrection and the Life," or, to use Paul's later words, that He had "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light by His gospel."

"Death had no more dominion over Him,
Death was swallowed up in Life."

This, the final scene, when, after being "seen of five hundred brethren at once," He was "taken up" out of their sight, or, as we must understand it, His work was finished (Tetelestai), means that His Dematerialisation was complete, and the ideal end and method of man's final spiritual progress once for all established.

In the presence of this the most sacred and pregnant event in the history of Christ, it may seem irreverent to turn aside to speculate as to the *modus operandi* of the spiritual experience of which it was the outcome.

But, with all reverence, this is the very object we have here in view, and we are bound in the highest interests of our faith to speculate, that is to say, to turn in upon ourselves, and, by the light of this most marvellous record, press still further and with all loyal persistence the question of Origen, and ask ourselves what we may be able to discern of the spiritual rationale of the Resurrection of Christ.

Was this experience, in fact, not the great Central fact of those "many things" He had to say unto them yet, but which the disciples "could not yet bear"?—the crowning act in those "greater works than these" which He so plainly told them they would yet be privileged to do?

May this, indeed, not be the Cosmic secret of man's whole being? May it not be the great historical meaning and realisation of Paul's brilliant prophetic vision in Romans viii. when he summed up the glorious potentialities of that nature which we wear in common with Him, and described us as "Heirs of God," and "joint-heirs with Jesus Christ"; when he told his Colossian brethren that their life was "hid with Christ in God," and which

he proclaimed as "the mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of the mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory"? And Paul does not merely speak with ecstatic enthusiasm of this Divine Life, he urges his disciple Timothy in the most solemn practical way, "O Man of God! *lay hold of Eternal Life!*"

An ideal such as this could not fail to react in the most powerful way on the whole thought and life of men. For as we so "*lay hold of Eternal Life,*" and with the intensity of our spirits become consciously one with it, there flows into us, and through us to all whom we may reach, the very "virtue" and power of God, of which the Healing Works were and are still fitted and intended to be the daily witness.

Some of Paul's figures and comparisons are most striking, but they are not always quite continuous. He wrote, as we can see, in a state of tense feeling, and, orator-like, was always much more intent on the effect he aimed at producing on his readers' minds and hearts than on the strict continuity of his sentences. In the case of this commanding thought and phrase, once he struck on it he seems to have held on to it and pressed it more than was his custom. He was

evidently drawn by the grandeur of the thought and reluctant to leave it. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Then in verse 16 he reaches the irresistible confession and declaration which, consciously or unconsciously, under one or another form of words, has been the underlying conviction of every seeking soul—the sense of the unutterable nearness of the Eternal, surrounding and inspiring us—"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are *the children of God*." This conviction, be it slowly reached or instinctively grasped, is the one sure "internal evidence"—sure with the surety of our own consciousness that we are one with God. It is here that we find the one racial and permanent guarantee of the spiritual life of man.

Having reached this endearing phrase, "the children of God," Paul dwells on it and expands it in his own characteristic way—"and if children then heirs," as the inherent privilege of children. Then, as if to prevent all merely side issues into which his verbal suggestiveness seemed constantly to be in danger of leading him, "Heirs of God," he says. This is the crowning phrase of the vision. What a contrast it suggests to the customary and legitimate pride of heirship which

every Jew felt and gloried in ! Heirs of the Law we could have understood, Heirs of the promises, Heirs of the Testimony, but "Heirs of God" ! We are apt to feel as if Paul here got lost in his own ecstatic vision and metaphors. For a man might be understood as heir of any or all of God's gifts, and what an inheritance were that ! But such a thought is not to be named in the same breath with the thought that here masters Paul. These are all merely objective gifts. This is the very nature of God Himself. And as if to make it more definite and unchallengeable still, he adds, "and joint-heirs with Christ." That is to say, whatever Christ, the Master, enjoyed, we by nature ("if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you") enjoy to the full. Then he passes through "the sufferings of this present time" to "the glory which shall be revealed in us." And this glory his vision shows him is not to be in *us* only. It is here that the real cosmic sweep of his vision comes into view. "For the earnest expectation of the *creation* waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God." Time after time in consecutive verses our translators use the word "creature" here for the original *ktisis*, till at last they feel compelled by Paul's emphatic word *whole* to use the more commanding word *Creation*, and thus they emphasise the real cosmic and not merely individual range of the vision. "For the

creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." Because (and this is the objective climax) the *creation* itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. And as if to show how acutely he entered into the consciousness of this bondage of creation, he adds: "For we know that the *whole creation* groaneth and travaileth in pain together till now." And not only so, but "*ourselves also*, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the deliverance of our body."

The lower as well as the higher elements of creation shall share in the great deliverance which awaits ourselves.

The misleading word "redemption" (*apolutrosis*) should be here rendered "deliverance," and evidently refers to the final purification and rarefaction of our natural body into the spiritual body which is our true and abiding form.

For man is yet to throw off his carnality entire. He is by the expulsive and consuming fire of this new "affection" to get finally rid of this too engrossing flesh, and be drawn into the light and purity and love of the unseen Reality.

Of that Eternal Life the keynote, as of old, is Joy and Conscious Power, and in its hourly realisation we have our true life's mission fulfilled.

We too often pass over this "Heirship of God," and other such phrases, as of at most only rhetorical value, but what a world of meaning is wrapped up in them! Paul has here risen, as he so often does, beyond the proud consciousness of his Jewish upbringing; and, leaving far behind his Jewish prejudices, he rises into a plane which reveals him as revelling in the very springs of our human nature, and glorying exultantly in his Divine birthright.

That phrase alone, "Heirs of God," we believe, gives us the key to the whole Christian revelation. In fact it suggests that not so much Revelation (*ab extra*, that is to say) as the Self-manifestation of the Divine Being and of man's inseparable union with Him is the true name for the message of Christ. "The Life was manifested, and we have seen it." And if that be so, does the fact not furnish us with a new and more suggestive warrant for "the Christian Era," as we call it, in which we live? Surely the laying bare by Jesus Christ of this spiritual glory of our nature, such a raising of our poor humanity to the very height of the Divine, for ever differentiates His message from all else?

We may be told that any such suggestion is, if nothing else, a vain prying into the mysteries of Ontology, and a turning aside from the simple gospel of Christ. The very reverse is true. The

greatest study of mankind is man. The philosophy of the ages—that is to say, the deepest yearnings of man's spirit—have ever beaten around this standing problem. With greater or less result have men clamoured and striven for an answer. And when we look around us and bear in mind with what blind pertinacity, each on its own lines—Religion and Science—the most powerful efforts of the mind of man have steadily been converging towards what is, after all, one form or other of this very truth—the Union of Man with God—we cannot but feel driven to utter in our own way the solemn cry of the patriarch Jacob when he woke from his desert dream, “Verily God is in this place, and I knew it not.”

Man Divine ! Once we grasp its truth, the whole Bible is seen to glow and burn with it all through. Passages and incidents in it formerly unintelligible shine with a lustre all their own. The New Testament specially is full of it. Man's Heirship of God and all that that implied was a living consciousness, in the fresh years of Christ's ministry. The consequent Joy that was His own rang also through the daily lives of the first Christians. How much they were clearly conscious of, or whether they could have in any but the most simple way defined their feelings, it is often hard to say, but they knew what Joy was. They had the irresistible testimony of the blind man, “Whereas I was blind, now I

see ! ” In the sunlight of His presence they maintained that Joy, and before He disappeared from their midst they came to understand something of the hidden meaning of which He spoke when He said, “ I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” He had to train them gradually into the apprehension of the transcendent glory of their own nature. And to think that it was all lost in careless oblivion ! and furthermore, that it has been reserved for these later times to rediscover and reproduce this amazing truth !

Nothing is so striking as the wealth of human effort that has been and is being brought to bear on its elucidation. Religion, Philosophy, and Psychology have all combined, but we must ever fall back on the direct evidence and teaching of our own spirits. And, as Christians, our wisest course is to endeavour to gather up the evidence of the great Master Intuitionist, and to study His sayings and Life.

We there find that Christ even sanctions the word “ Gods,” and Paul’s words “ *Theion Genos* ” plainly suggest that man is continuous in his inner nature with the very essence of the Divine. If this be true, and its truth as philosophy is irresistible, we cannot and dare not avoid seeming to read it into Christ’s otherwise dark sayings. We find in doing so that the great words and deeds of Christ receive an illumination which is its own evidence.

And as matter of personal experience we come to see that even these—the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, and the Ascension—the great outstanding experiences of Christ's life, are as natural in the full sense of that word as every other step in what we call the Divine Life in man—that it is “up to us,” as the phrase goes, that is to say, is the legitimate and ultimately inevitable because Divinely natural end of our being, to rise similarly into our true state and realise our Divine inheritance as “Saints in light,” or, in the unsurpassable words of Paul, as “Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.”

So overpowering is the prospect thus opened up for our human spirits that in trying to understand the profound teaching of the Master we must learn to dismiss all merely rhetorical explanations of His words, and fearlessly condense into literal truth His most challenging and arresting words. If we can learn this Divine art we shall surely succeed in giving the world a new bold reading of the Scripture story—a reading that cannot fail to have issues beyond all precedent—issues that will react on our spirits and our life in ways beyond the wildest dreams of Church or sage.

Now to many minds it may seem as if what has been here said were too much of the nature of mere fanciful reading or pretentious commentary on the Scripture story. Let us see if the Scripture story

itself throws any light on the reading we have given. We have ventured to assert that the great objective critical incidents in Christ's life were, and were intended to be, great beacon lights for the voyage of human life—that for us and all mankind they serve as guides and incentives to our higher life, and are therefore of paramount importance to every thoughtful soul.

Let us take, then, in chronological order some of the various instances in Scripture that point at least in the direction of what we have said. We do so not as in themselves necessary for proof of the later and greater incidents. They rather, in view of those later incidents, find themselves incorporated in what we may reverently call the Natural history of the Supernatural.

And let us remember that these instances are found in quarters and at periods of history far apart, and capable of being received quite independently of the Christian records, although to one's natural amazement they find themselves imbedded in that crowning narrative. They call loudly for consideration on their merits. What, then, do they point to in common? The first man unaccounted for in the ordinary way was Enoch, "sixth from Adam." Of Enoch we have the strikingly concise but comprehensive biography in the brief words, "He walked with God, and was not, for God took him." He was the shortest-lived of the patriarchs

of his day, a year for every day in our calendar. But what a biography ! “ He walked with God ! ”

Was the strain of the spiritual joy of that unexampled “ walk ” too great to be longer borne ? Or, rather, was the rapture of his self-dedicated life such that he was early caught away to his own fitting place ? If so, what a communion of spirit we have here ! What a living illustration, in actual human experience, of Paul’s later account of the higher life as “ from glory to glory ” ! And at the end, what a noiseless rapture ! Could any words more suggestively hint it ? “ He was not ! ” And can any doubt remain as to the hand that thus rapt him from beyond the troubled scene of life ? “ For God took him.”

Who has not in some faint way experienced this rapture by God ? Intense communion of our spirits with God in prayer is rarely carried to this climax, simply because before we reach that glorious height we begin to experience a shrinking of our spirits from the fearful joy of our approach.

We begin, as it were, to feel instinctively the meaning of the words, “ Our God is a consuming fire.” We draw back and stop short of the rich reward of that great act of union with the Eternal which is ours for the grasping. *Fas est ab hoste doceri.* And as this experience seems to be the *ne plus ultra* of our human powers, and open alike to every striving soul, does it not help us in a very striking

way to find in our own day even one who was called a modern apostle of Pessimism using the same identical words as did Paul, to describe the daily contact and community of the Unseen Life with our own? Here is how the so-called Atheist, James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, comments at large on this striking phrase, "Our God is a consuming fire":—

"This life surrounds you, clasps you, supports you, penetrates you, informs you, '*consumes you.*'—When the pure fire pervades and possesses you, you are no more. In the instant of attaining the perfect, the only true life, you are utterly annihilated. Of two men only is that Divine consummation recorded in your very astonishing Holy Writings, and it is certain that you are wont to die now, not by utter consumption of your materiality, but for *want of the informing fire*, so you perish from separate organisation, leaving abundant carcass to swell the earth's general stock and be worked up and consumed in other forms." Comment of ours is needless.

The next in order is "the man of God, Moses." Of his exceptional story every child has read, and of his earthly end we are told in the simplest of words. "God buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, but no man knoweth his sepulchre unto this day;" and again, and in language more germane to our present subject—"whom the Lord knew face to

face in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do." Is it too much presumption to believe that one whom God thus took into His special keeping was raised in Glory, and passed direct into the unseen land?—removed thus from the almost certain idolatry of those whom he had led here before?

Then, too, the next was *Elijah* the prophet. And here we have, as it were, a nearer view of invisible things, and human metaphor is strained in the attempt to tell us what and how it happened; and a most rare bit of human experience it was.

The two prophets, Elijah and his successor, were on the way together from sacred Gilgal. The tense feeling of either on the occasion is not given in words, but is most graphically seen and felt in their acts. "Tarry here," said Elijah, "I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel." "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth," said Elisha in his most loyal refusal, "I will not leave thee." So they went down to Bethel. And as if to test the reality of Elisha's faith, and surely with the over-eager excitement of young men at the sight of the two: "Knowest thou," cried the young prophets, "that the Lord will take away thy Master from thy side to-day?" "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace!" The Spirit of God was astir in the land. "Tarry ye here," said Elijah, "for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho."

Again, "As the Lord liveth I will not leave thee."

Yet another time was the test repeated, till they came to Jordan. "And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, *if thou see me* when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee: but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by *a whirlwind* into heaven. And Elisha *saw it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more. . . . And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him . . . and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over."

This latter detail corresponds strikingly with the recorded fact that on several occasions in the life

of Christ the eyes of some men were "holden" that they could not see Him. The spiritual body, *i. e.*, is discerned spiritually, but can be made objectively visible. When occasion required He could and did pass through the crowd unseen.

Such facts as these may, as already said, seem insufficient as evidence for the Transfiguration of the human spirit. But we must remember that one well-authenticated instance of such an event is equal to a thousand, and that Christ Himself spake of it beforehand, as well as at the time, in the most plain, unrhctorical manner. If the Scripture record has any historical validity, Christ was transfigured before the very eyes of His disciples, He was received up out of their sight. And though no one was by to witness and record it, He rose from the dead in that same spiritual body by the sheer force of His spirit, and was thus proclaimed as the "first-fruits of them that slept."

These great facts of His human life we accept as great human landmarks in man's progress from the seen to the Unseen, from time into Eternity. This is the life which He came to proclaim and unveil.

Now obviously the difficulty of such a conception is found on its very face. How is it possible for man to "unite" with the Eternal, and at the same time to retain his personal identity? How easily does the idea of such a possibility lend itself to mockery as, on the face of it, an absurdity!

Strictly speaking, this so-called absurdity can never be got rid of by the intellect. The human and the Divine, to the clear vision and confident assertion of the logical faculty, must ever stand apart. But enter the Temple. Get behind the logic of the concrete, penetrate the depth of your own spirit. Here in this most searching attitude of the human spirit we find that this surface mystery *solvitur ambulando*. The Beyond, we find, is also the Within. The objective and the Subjective combine in one transcendent grasp of our spirit, and man, if only momentarily and spasmodically, realises his Divinity. Here this great outstanding mystery of every human life is once for all illuminated. Man's own spirit is the master key to it, and each man's own inner experience is ever the measure of his insight. Once it is experienced, man is ready to proclaim it on the house-tops. The mystical experience is everywhere its embodiment. And just as it is the most profoundly human of all experiences, so its record is as old as history. And it is surely inspiring to a degree to find it borne witness to from the very ends of the earth, and sometimes in the most simple and graphic language.

Such was the writer's own experience on one unforgettable occasion when one of two scholarly gifted Indian graduates, on what was really a missionary tour in Britain! discoursing on their own cherished Vedanta faith, chose as his sub-

ject "The Everlasting Friend," and calmly but enthusiastically declared that man's "everlasting Friend" was to be found, and found only, in "the full consciousness of our own souls" !

Here surely was the inevitable Monism of a true philosophy brought home to and shown to be one with the very central passion of our own being; and the ecstatic experience which is more or less within every man's reach found to be the practical solution of philosophy's own problem.

It is the identical philosophy and spiritual joy of Christ which He so marvellously summed up in the striking words, "I and my Father are one." It is unmistakably the vital source of what He called "My Joy," which He ever prayed might be His disciples' daily experience. That this great truth of the unity of man with God is the one and only "secret" of Jesus is beyond all reasonable doubt. All his amazing experiences and most spiritual revelation led steadily up to it. And it is obviously a truth which is the common property of the profoundest philosophy and the simplest faith.

But Christ did more than simply declare His secret doctrine, He demonstrated it so far as such a thought and life can be demonstrated to mortal man. And it is certain that it would never have been firmly planted in the heart of men but for that other outstanding fact in His life—His Resur-

rection. That was the objective manifestation and demonstration of the spiritual teaching of Jesus. "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain."

It is this great fact that accounts for the enormous pains that were taken to teach the disciples the fact and the meaning of the Resurrection. It is this that accounts for the astonishing enthusiasm of the early Church. The fact was burned in on their hearts and filled their lives.

And however divergent and even perverted became the Church's form of thought, it is this faith that made and has repeatedly saved the Church.

It may be plausibly objected, and we quite anticipate being told, that the teaching here set forth is pointless and ineffective, as not being, to use a familiar phrase, "within the region of practical politics." We shall certainly be asked if we seriously expect to supersede the long-tried and universally accepted "form of sound words," known and, externally at least, revered by the Christian world as the sure "way of salvation," by a form of thought and teaching which, we shall be told, gives the mass of common men nothing to grip that can be of any real value to them in the trials and failures of their daily life. The surest and most modest way of answering this question is to remind those who put it, that that same "form of sound words," to which presumably they themselves still cling, has itself broken down, and

stands revealed before the world as a great spiritual failure. At the risk of being deemed superficial we decline to argue the point. It is a question of plain fact, and among the first to admit its failure are many of the official exponents of our Christian theology.

Like every other large question forming part of our modern outlook, this matter is best dealt with in the lurid light shed on it by the great calamity and trial through which Europe is still passing on the battle-field. So vital is the influence of the great war felt to be that one prominent Christian teacher in England, in his latest contribution to the consideration, puts the question with almost brutal bluntness and asks, "Will there be any religion left, and, if so, what sort of religion will it be?"

As a layman, the writer makes no apology for endeavouring to take part in the discussion. The clergy in doing so are simply doing their duty, but the issue is of course not professional but universal, and the course of modern thought on this subject has to a large extent abolished any distinction between clergy and laity.

We are face to face with great human issues, and on the hearts of our soldiers these great, though profoundly simple, issues are recognised and felt, it may be partly unconsciously, as the very stuff of which the life of their spirits consists. War free

of individual vindictiveness is the climax of tragedy. In the glow and stress of the battle-field the earthly veil is constantly being withdrawn, and there is a steady interaction of the seen with the unseen in the hearts of men, and with the thoughtful soul the natural unbidden feelings are transfigured and raised into a consciousness of the eternal. The man who has seriously passed through it feels that his vision has been quickened and his life renewed. He is the last man even to speak of it, but he knows it, and knows that after such a searching and convincing experience the reiteration of the well-worn phrases of Church religion has all but lost its meaning. What is he to get instead?

Whatever we are to offer him must be as universal as the world-wide humanity with which he has just been mingling. Nothing less than the perfect brotherhood of man, based on and embodying the perfect Fatherhood of God. This is the most purely human message the heart of man can conceive. This and nothing else was the essential message of Christ. This is what we have here endeavoured to set forth. This is the objective form and meaning of what we have called Christ's Secret Doctrine. The glory of that doctrine is that it fills and ennobles the heart of man, and is burning itself in on the hearts and lives of the wide-flung millions on the field and at home and everywhere.

Now in these fateful days on which hangs the future of our people, and of at least the Western world, one vital question comes unconsciously to the front and will constitute, we believe, the turning-point for all pre-war men and women. Men are asking, and will continue to ask with increasing eagerness, the question that is as old as Christianity, "What think ye of Christ?" That question is more in need of an answer than ever. And there can be no doubt that one of the strongest obstacles to clear thought and healthful conviction on this subject has all along been the time-honoured dread of seeming at least to infringe on the Divinity of Christ. To do so has been taught by the Church as undermining the foundation of the faith and robbing Christianity of its most vital doctrine.

The very point of the faith that we here support is, that all that was ever claimed as the prerogative of Christ is preserved in all its fullness in the new doctrine of Divine Humanity. The Divinity of Christ is not lost but, on the contrary, preserved and given a place in the thoughts of man more sure and abiding than ever, for it is seen to be an inseparable part of the only rational conception of the universe that can ever satisfy human thought. The glad light of dawn is not lost when it is succeeded by the far richer, fuller light of the noonday sun. No one can imagine that such a faith embodied in the long-standing Creed and History of Christi-

anity can be relinquished lightly or thoughtlessly. But these are not light or thoughtless times that have come upon us. The change in creed was inevitable, war or no war. But the war has provided a great highway for the deep-lying aspirations of our common humanity. It has welded together as never before the mass of humanity in a practical brotherhood that is of itself the only fitting mould for the larger faith that looms before our eyes. The opportunity now afforded to every serious lover of the race has not been paralleled since the day of Christ. That it will be turned to account is certain, but woe to the man or Church that fails to assist in the new and glorious Renaissance.

Although the words themselves are not novel, it is interesting and *à propos* to refer briefly to a book entitled *Divine Humanity*,¹ published since the foregoing was written. The present writer's standpoint seems so clearly indicated by the title of the book that a direct reference to it is called for.

The writer seems to "let I dare not wait upon I would," for he cites the striking and suggestive words of Archbishop Temple: "It is quite possible that our Lord's Resurrection may be found hereafter to be no miracle at all in the scientific sense . . . but the first instance of the working of a law till the last day quite unknown, but on that last

¹ By Alexander Pym, London; J. & J. Bennett, Ltd.

day operative on all" (*Science and Religion*, pp. 196, 197). But he merely glances at this suggestion, and passes on. The author innocently sets himself to the hopeless task of squaring the circle. But the mystery of man's nature, the greatest and most pregnant mystery that man can face, can never be understood or explained by the dim and confused light of an infantile theology, for it is the unassailable truth to say that without the full truth contained in these two plain words, "Divine Humanity," no really intelligible religion, cosmology, or philosophy is possible. Unfortunately the Christian Church long ago decided in its blindness—not, however, without serious and age-long dissension—that the very title here chosen was but an impossible metaphor, so that to-day the task of piercing the metaphor and interpreting the great parable is the *sine qua non* for the future of Christianity. But the task has to be performed.

Here, meantime, is a genuinely Christian writer, perfectly versed in the Scriptures and gifted with a power of exposition above the common, who yet, in spite of his evident sense of the world's slow preparation for Christ's life and message, and with the flaming torch of that message actually in his hands, yet wholly misses its very kernel and the great philosophical and spiritual reconciliation which is the one and only answer to his search. For this circle *can* be squared, but squared only by the

illumination which Scripture itself supplies, and the key to the process lies ready to our hand in the clearly implicit teaching of Christ Himself.

And yet this writer would like to hold by the principle of evolution; but, as a mere question of cosmic analogy, what terminus in the evolution of the spiritual faculties of man can there be, short of this very truth of Divine Humanity? Rightly seen it is the very climax of Scripture teaching as well as the irresistible dictum of spiritual experience.

For, first of all, philosophy requires a Unity. In the last resort of thought Duality in the Universe is impossible. Whatever modification of thought the practical intellect may seem compelled to allow, God and man are and remain One. As for experience, anomalous as it may seem, with nothing less can the human spirit be satisfied. In the depths of our consciousness, our spirits, so far from being alarmed or intimidated by the thought of "being equal with God," as was charged against Christ, find themselves in that very thought risen to the true height of our whole being. That inspiring and overpowering consciousness irresistibly proclaims the Divinity of our nature.

Blindness and timidity alone have too long prevailed and prevented the reception and glad enjoyment of this Divine secret; henceforward, what one of our strongest poets called "Man's tendency to

God " is recognised and cannot fail of its true welcome.

" Now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is." Man hitherto has not, save in rare and noble instances, had the insight to conceive or the courage to hail and acknowledge his real Divinity of Nature. To-day the spiritual meaning of life is hopeless without it.

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